

The Early Modern Legacy of the Stoics

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Abstract: This article examines the reception of Stoicism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, from Justus Lipsius to Immanuel Kant. It considers topics often associated with Stoicism during the period, notably the interconnected concepts of fate, necessity, and providence, as well as the rise and development of scholarship on Stoicism during the period. While this was an especially rich period for the reception of Stoicism, more often than not the Stoics found themselves drawn into contemporary disputes, such as the potentially atheistic conclusions of Spinoza's philosophy. At the same time, it saw a shift away from seeing Seneca as the pre-eminent Stoic and towards the systematic philosophy of Zeno and Chrysippus.

Keywords: Stoicism, Lipsius, Hobbes, Cudworth, Leibniz, Bayle, Spinoza, Diderot, Kant

By the end of antiquity more or less all the works of the Hellenistic Stoics were lost.¹ The subsequent reception of Stoic ideas was thus always second hand, either via reports and quotations from other ancient authors or via the works of the later Roman Stoics, especially Seneca and Epictetus. In the Latin west during the Middle Ages and Renaissance, knowledge of Stoicism came primarily from the works of Seneca and Cicero. The Renaissance saw the rediscovery of a wide variety other texts that were rich sources of information about Stoicism, in many cases Greek texts brought to Italy from Byzantium. These included the *Vitae philosophorum* of Diogenes Laertius, brought to Italy in the 1420s and translated into Latin by Ambrogio Traversari in the 1430s, and the works of Sextus Empiricus, which were drawn on by the humanist Francesco Filelfo.² The *Enchiridion* of Epictetus was also read and translated into Latin around this time, although mediated by the Neoplatonic commentary of Simplicius.

¹ This chapter focuses on the reception of Stoicism from *c.* 1600 to *c.* 1800. For an account of the reception of Stoicism in the immediately preceding period *c.* 1400 to *c.* 1600, see Sellars 2017b. For a survey of the reception of Stoicism from Rome to the present day, see Sellars 2016a.

² Filelfo is noteworthy for being one of the first people to focus his attention not on the Roman Stoics but instead on Zeno and Chrysippus, drawing on Sextus Empiricus, Diogenes Laertius, and Plutarch as sources. See further Sellars 2017b.

While discussions tended during the Middle Ages and early Renaissance to focus on ethical matters – virtue, indifferents, emotions – in the fifteenth century Marsilio Ficino was one of the first to pay attention to Stoic physics and metaphysics, questioning the previously widely held assumption that Stoicism was broadly compatible with Christian teaching. Stoic materialism and pantheism could never, he argued, be reconciled with Christian doctrine. On the other side of the debate, the Aristotelian Pietro Pomponazzi defended aspects of Stoic physics against critics. In particular he argued in favour of Stoic determinism, both drawing on and responding to the *De fato* of Alexander of Aphrodisias.³ In general, though, discussions of Stoicism during this period tended to focus on ethical topics and took Seneca as the primary point of reference. Indeed, Seneca attracted considerable attention into the sixteenth century from figures such as Desiderus Erasmus and Jean Calvin, as well as Justus Lipsius, to whom we shall return shortly. Michel de Montaigne also read Seneca, alongside Epictetus, Plutarch, and other ancient authors, and these would all prove to be important points of reference in his *Essais*.⁴

While the Stoics were regular points of reference in Renaissance humanist discussions of a number of philosophical topics, knowledge of Stoicism remained fairly superficial, especially beyond the realm of ethics. This started to change in the first decade of the seventeenth century, which saw a flurry of works that together formed the first serious attempt at a scholarly understanding of Stoicism. Paramount among these was a pair of handbooks written by Justus Lipsius and published in 1604: the *Manuductio ad Stoicam Philosophiam* and *Physiologia Stoicorum*.⁵ Lipsius was already a committed Stoic, drawing on Stoic precepts in his own life.⁶ Twenty years

³ On both Ficino and Pomponazzi, see Krayer 2016: 140-1 and Sellars 2017b.

⁴ Subsequent discussions of Stoicism, especially in France, were often intertwined with the reception of Montaigne. This was especially the case with Nicolas Malebranche and Blaise Pascal.

⁵ See Lipsius 1604a and 1604b. For discussion see Saunders 1955 and Lagrée 1994.

⁶ For an account of Lipsius's life see Morford 1991.

earlier, in 1584, he had published *De Constantia*, a broadly Stoic guide to coping with adversity that proved to be a bestseller, going through multiple editions and being quickly translated into all the major European vernacular languages.⁷ Among many other works of classical scholarship, Lipsius prepared a substantial edition of Seneca's philosophical works, with introductions and commentaries, published in 1605; his two handbooks published the year before were presented as supplements to his edition of Seneca, providing readers of the great Roman Stoic with all the background information they might need about his professed philosophy. What Lipsius produced were the first serious studies of Stoicism as a philosophical system, in the form of doxographical sourcebooks drawing on the full range of ancient evidence available, embedded within his own interpretative commentary. They were reprinted a number of times during the seventeenth century and they were to become the standard point of reference for discussions about Stoicism in the early modern period.⁸

Of the many aspects of Lipsius's account of Stoic philosophy, one that was to prove both influential and controversial was his discussion of fate. In his earlier *De Constantia* Lipsius had appeared to argue that the Stoic theory of fate was problematic and must be modified; but in his later *Physiologia Stoicorum* he defended the Stoic account of fate without modification.⁹ It has been common to suggest that, via Lipsius, early modern thinkers often encountered a modified, Christianized version of Stoicism (so-called

⁷ See Lipsius 1584. By 1705 it had been printed 32 times (see Van Der Haeghen 1886: I, 73-138) and translated into Dutch, French, German, Spanish, Polish, Italian, and English (see Van Der Haeghen 1886: I, 139-75, who omits the Italian and English editions; these are noted in Van De Bilt 1946: 106-8).

⁸ After first publication in 1604, both works were reprinted in a smaller octavo edition in 1604, in 1610, and together in a pocket duodecimo edition in 1644 under the title *Philosophia & Physiologia Stoica* (Lipsius 1644). They were also reprinted in editions of Lipsius's *Opera Omnia*, in 1613, 1614, 1637, and 1675. For details see Van Der Haeghen 1886: II, 553-62 and 215-61.

⁹ Compare Lipsius 1584: 64-8 with Lipsius 1604b: 28-32. See further Sellars 2014. I argue there that in fact there is little difference between Lipsius's accounts of Stoic fate in the two works, and the headline claims in *De Constantia* that the Stoic position must be modified are in many ways misleading.

“Neostoicism”) that downplayed the deterministic implications of its materialism.¹⁰ However, Lipsius’s own view – on this topic at least – differed little from the ancient sources. Critics of Stoicism had charged it with subordinating divine providence to fate; one particularly problematic passage in Seneca appeared to subordinate God to fate, despite presenting God as the author of fate: “Although the great creator and ruler of the universe himself wrote the decrees of Fate, yet he follows them. He obeys forever, he decreed but once.”¹¹ Yet doxographical sources for the early Stoa insisted on a straightforward identification of fate with providence.¹² In the *Physiologia*, Lipsius defended Seneca by saying that the Roman Stoic had simply expressed himself poorly. In this Lipsius followed Augustine’s discussion of Stoic fate in *De civitate Dei*, which argued that the difference between the Stoic and Christian positions was merely one of verbal expression.¹³ On this complex issue, the account that Lipsius passed on to early modern readers, was unaltered Stoicism.¹⁴

In the same decade that Lipsius’s two handbooks appeared, a number of other works devoted to Stoicism were also published. These included Adam Bursius’s *Dialectica Ciceronis ... Maxime ex Stoicorum Sententia* (1604), a detailed study of Stoic logic and epistemology, Isaac Casaubon’s edition of the Stoic poet Persius (1605), with an extensive commentary touching on a wide range of points in Stoic doctrine, and Caspar Scioppius’s *Elementa Philosophiae Stoicae Moralis* (1606), who stressed the practical orientation of Stoicism and argued for its superiority over Aristotelian ethics.¹⁵ Less scholarly but also

¹⁰ On Neostoicism in general see Zanta 1914, Oestreich 1982, and Lagrée 2010.

¹¹ See Seneca *Prov.* 5.8.

¹² See e.g. Calcidius in *Tim.* 144 (LS 54U).

¹³ See Augustine *De civitate Dei* 5.8 (*SVF* 2.932).

¹⁴ On this point I agree with Krayer 1988: 370 that “Neostoicism” ought to be understood not as a modified, Christianized version of Stoicism but rather as an attempt to show that conflicts between Stoic and Christian teaching “were more apparent than real”. I discuss this issue further in Sellars 2014.

¹⁵ For a brief discussion of all these works see Sellars 2017b. For a fuller discussion of Scioppius see Krayer 2008.

influential was the *De Stoica Philosophia* (1612) by Daniel Heinsius.¹⁶ Within just a few years, then, there suddenly existed an important body of scholarly and interpretative work on Stoicism. However, as we shall see, the Roman Stoics Seneca and Epictetus would more often than not remain the principal points of reference when it came to philosophical debates involving the Stoics.

This was especially so in France: René Descartes and Nicolas Malebranche focused their attentions on Seneca, while Pascal was more concerned with Epictetus, who was widely read in the wake of the work of Guillaume Du Vair, author of *Philosophie morale des Stoïques* (1585) and translator of the *Enchiridion* (1591).¹⁷ In all three cases ethical themes predominated. In the 1640s Descartes discussed Seneca's *De vita beata* in his correspondence with Princess Elizabeth.¹⁸ Although Descartes was sympathetic to the Stoic claim that virtue is the highest good, he was less enamoured of their rejection of pleasure. He found Zeno's account of virtue too severe and too detached from the body. Instead he proposed a syncretic position bringing together Stoic, Epicurean, and Aristotelian ethics, claiming that all three schools were correct when it came to identifying the highest good. Despite that, Descartes's final view was strongly Stoic: "happiness consists solely in contentment of mind [...] in order to achieve a contentment which is solid, we need to pursue virtue – that is to say, to maintain a firm and constant will to bring about everything we judge to be best".¹⁹

¹⁶ This oration was first published in Heinsius 1612: 131-92, and reprinted many times. It was widely read and Heinsius was listed at the end of the article on Stoicism in the *Encyclopedie* (Diderot and d'Alembert 1765: XV, 533) as one of the four principal modern revivers of Stoicism, alongside Lipsius, Scioppius, and Thomas Gataker. On Heinsius see Santinello 1993: 129-32.

¹⁷ For a fuller account of Stoicism in seventeenth century France, see Moriarty 2016 and also Brooke 2012: 76-100. Other figures in France who engaged with Stoicism during this period, both positively and critically, included Pierre Charron, Jean-François Senault, and Antoine Le Grand.

¹⁸ See Descartes 1897-1910: IV, 251-3, 263-8, 271-8. In what follows I focus on the letter to Elizabeth dated 18 August 1645, at 271-8.

¹⁹ Descartes 1897-1910: IV, 277.

Malebranche was also reading Seneca, in particular the *De constantia sapientis*. In his *De la recherche de la verité* (1674-78), he wrote that although he was impressed by Seneca's rhetoric, he was less convinced by his arguments.²⁰ Ironically, then, Malebranche argued, this Stoic incites the emotions but fails to engage one's reason. His main objection, though, was against the idealized image of the Stoic sage. Seneca's claim that such a person might exist, or that Cato the Younger may have even exceeded it,²¹ seemed fanciful to him. Turning instead to Epicurus and, more importantly, St Paul, Malebranche argued that a wise person might be able to bear great suffering, but to claim that they won't even notice it is absurd. The Stoic image of the autonomous sage is arrogant and impious, Malebranche claimed, and Seneca's account is all the more dangerous precisely because he presented it in a rhetorically powerful manner. Having said that, he also acknowledged that not everything Seneca said was wrong and that someone securely in possession of Christian truth might cautiously read him with profit.

Malebranche's final criticisms of Stoicism are curious and illustrate the limitations of taking one of Seneca's essays to stand for Stoic doctrine as a whole. In order to undermine the image of the completely autonomous sage untouched by adversity, Malebranche insists that "we are tied to our body, to our parents, to our friends, to our prince, to our country, by bonds we cannot break".²² The soul, he continues, is intimately connected with the body and, via it, to the rest of the physical world. Human beings are naturally social and this bond is unbreakable because "one is never above Nature".²³ Much of this the Stoics would have accepted and hardly taken to

²⁰ See *De la recherche de la verité* Book 2, Part 3, Chapter 4, in Malebranche 1674-78: I, 273-88, esp. 274.

²¹ See Seneca *Constant.* 7.1.

²² Malebranche 1674-78: I, 286.

²³ Malebranche 1674-78: I, 287.

undermine their views. Malebranche's argument, then, was not with the details of Stoic doctrine – about which he probably knew fairly little – but instead with Seneca's overly rhetorical image of a completely autonomous individual. For Malebranche, such an image of autonomy was dangerous because it undermined the Christian idea of grace.

Autonomy and grace were topics that also exercised Blaise Pascal, this time in connection with Epictetus. In a discussion with his spiritual director Isaac Le Maître de Sacy, Pascal praised Epictetus for many of his views, including his submission to God's will and his view that all things we receive are merely on loan and must at some point be returned without complaint.²⁴ However he was less impressed with what he called Epictetus's "wickedly proud" belief in human autonomy. Although he acknowledged that human powers come from God, Epictetus also thought that human freedom and happiness were completely within an individual's control.²⁵ He was ignorant of original sin and the need for divine grace. While there is much of value in Epictetus, Pascal acknowledged, he must be read cautiously and under supervision.

While in France Stoicism was often seen as a superficially attractive, but ultimately impious, philosophy, in England it gained a quite different reputation. There the reception of Stoicism tended to focus on physical and metaphysical issues. In particular, Stoicism was closely associated with determinism. In a series of exchanges between Thomas Hobbes and John Bramhall, Hobbes found himself branded as a Stoic.²⁶ Bramhall described Hobbes as a proponent of "the grossest destiny of all others, that is, that of

²⁴ The surviving text reporting the conversation, which took place in 1655, is not by Pascal himself and was first published in 1728. See Pascal 1954: 560-74.

²⁵ See e.g. Epictetus *Ench.* 1.1-4.

²⁶ These exchanges were published in a series of works between 1654 and 1658. Hobbes wrote a final reply in 1668, which was not published until 1682, after his death. See further Macdonald and Hargreaves 1952: 37-40. In what follows I focus on Hobbes and Bramhall 1656. I have at some places updated the spelling, in line with the modernized version in Hobbes 1839-45.

the Stoicks”.²⁷ Bramhall identified this with the position outlined by Lipsius in *De Constantia*, a position that Lipsius called “true fate” and explicitly distanced from “violent” or “Stoic fate”.²⁸ Yet, as claimed earlier, the distance between the two positions was not as great as Lipsius appeared to suggest, and Bramhall could see this. According to Bramhall, both Lipsius and Hobbes distanced themselves from the label “Stoic” while all the time remaining committed to their extreme form of determinism. In reply, Hobbes denied taking his doctrine from the Stoics, but felt no need to distance himself from them either. Their fault, so far as they had one, was not with their doctrine of fate, but “in feigning of a false God”, namely Jupiter instead of the one true God.²⁹

Bramhall repeatedly referred to Stoicism as the archetypal form of determinism: “A complete Stoick can neither pray, nor repent, nor serve God to any purpose. Either allow liberty, or destroy Church, as well as Commonwealth, Religion as well as Policy”.³⁰ Stoicism was no longer an admirable if austere ethical position – as it has been in the Renaissance – but now a dangerously heterodox physical theory.

Another person to claim that Hobbes was indebted to the Stoics was the Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth,³¹ who was also concerned about the determinism and potential atheism of the early Stoa. His *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678) included extensive discussion of Stoic doctrine,

²⁷ Bramhall 1655: 141; also in Hobbes and Bramhall 1656: 195 (repr. in Hobbes 1839-45: V, 242). See also Bramhall 1655 where, in the opening “To the Reader”, Hobbes’s position is described as “sublimated Stoacisme”.

²⁸ Bramhall 1655: 142; also in Hobbes and Bramhall 1656: 195-6 (repr. in Hobbes 1839-45: V, 242-3). Compare with Lipsius 1584: 64-8.

²⁹ Hobbes and Bramhall 1656: 197 (repr. in Hobbes 1839-45: V, 245). Hobbes cites *fatum est effatum Jovis*, which he takes from Bramhall’s discussion in Bramhall 1655: 137. Interestingly Bramhall’s argument there is not with the ancient Stoics but rather with what he calls “Stoicall Christians”. Bramhall argues that in fact “the Stoicall and Christian destiny are one and the same”.

³⁰ Bramhall 1655: 118; also in Hobbes and Bramhall 1656: 150 (repr. in Hobbes 1839-45: V, 198).

³¹ See Cudworth 1838: 73-6. Stoic themes in this work are discussed in Sellars 2012.

paying careful attention to the ancient evidence and differences of views between individual Stoics. In his taxonomy of different forms of atheism, Cudworth identified four different types among ancient philosophers: atomical, hylopathian, hylozoick, and cosmo-plastick.³² The last of these – “Cosmo-Plastick” or “Spermatick” atheism – he attributed to the Stoics. This type holds that there is a single living principle animating the natural world, and it is a form of atheism because this living principle is “without any sense or conscious understanding”.³³ Cudworth justified this claim with reference to a passage from Seneca’s *Naturales quaestiones*, which seemed to suggest that the world is alive in a manner akin to an animal or a plant.³⁴ But for Cudworth, atheism is always only a corruption of original theism, and he went on to argue that the earliest Stoics, and in particular Zeno, were indeed theists, albeit “ignorant, childish, and unskilful” ones.³⁵ The Stoic God, Cudworth argued, was originally conceived as a sentient, rational animal, but later Stoics corrupted this into the view that it was merely an unconscious principle at work in Nature. Seneca had equivocated whether the Stoic God was an animal or a plant, but before him Boethus of Sidon had been more emphatic, denying that the cosmos is an animal.³⁶ Although Boethus was a relatively minor Stoic, known to be heterodox on a number of points in Stoic physics, Cudworth raised him up as an “eminent and famous Stoical Doctor”, claiming that he had many followers among subsequent Stoics.³⁷

Cudworth’s discussions of Stoicism were in many respects the most important after Lipsius’s. He carefully distinguished between the views of different ancient Stoics and he was concerned not merely with the widely

³² See Cudworth 1678: 131-3, with discussion in Sellars 2011.

³³ Cudworth 1678: 131.

³⁴ See Cudworth 1678: 131, citing Seneca *QNat.* 3.29.2.

³⁵ Cudworth 1678: 136.

³⁶ See Diogenes Laertius 7.143 (*SVF* 3.Boeth.6).

³⁷ Cudworth 1678: 133-4.

known ethical claims but primarily with Stoic physics and metaphysics. Along the way he was probably the first person to brand at least some Stoics as atheists, a topic to which we shall return in due course. But it is also worth noting that Cudworth's fellow Cambridge Platonist Henry More was an avid reader of Marcus Aurelius, admiring the moral maxims of the Roman Stoic without being unduly concerned about the metaphysical implications of the implicit, underpinning Stoic doctrine. Indeed, More was quite happy to take inspiration from Marcus's *Meditations* in his own *Enchiridion Ethicum* (1668) while remaining highly critical of central Stoic doctrines, such as their attitude towards the emotions.³⁸ More was presumably not the only person reading the *Meditations* in England at this point, especially in the wake of the important editions of the text prepared by Meric Casaubon (1643) and Thomas Gataker (1652). Casaubon had already translated the *Meditations* into English in 1634, while Gataker's substantial introduction and commentary sought to reconcile Marcus's Stoicism with Holy Scripture.³⁹

In Germany in the late seventeenth century, there was an expansion of scholarly work on Stoicism, most notably in the hands of Jakob Thomasius, author of *Exercitatio de Stoica Mundi Exustione* (1676), which was reprinted as *Dissertationes ad Stoicae Philosophiae* (1682). His work, which engaged with other ancient schools alongside Stoicism, was critical of what he took to be Lipsius's attempt to reconcile Stoicism with Christianity, his objection being that this undermined any attempt to produce an impartial history of philosophy.⁴⁰ Thomasius is probably best remembered now as one of the teachers and correspondents of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. Leibniz touched on Stoic material throughout his vast body of work, but one of the more sustained discussions can be found in his *Théodicée* (1710), the only book he

³⁸ On More's reading of Marcus Aurelius see Sellars 2017a.

³⁹ For full details of the editions by both Casaubon and Gataker, see Wickham Legg 1910: 37-8. For further discussion of the reception of Marcus in this period, including the work of Casaubon and Gataker, see Kraye 2012.

⁴⁰ See the discussions in Santinello 1993: 409-42, esp. 428, and Brooke 2012: 137.

published during his lifetime, and so consequently the work via which he was most widely known.⁴¹

In the *Théodicée* Leibniz discussed the Stoics alongside numerous other philosophers on the topic of freedom and determinism. He suggested that the Stoics were “in favour of determinism and against necessity, although they have been accused of attaching necessity to everything”.⁴² He drew on Cicero’s account in *De fato* of Chrysippus’s compatibilist attempt to steer a middle course between freedom and necessity, and then, following the lead of Lipsius, turned to Aulus Gellius for a fuller account.⁴³ The latter reported Chrysippus’s analogy between human action and a rolling cylinder, the movement of which is the product of an external cause combined with the cylinder’s shape.⁴⁴ Leibniz challenged the objections against Chrysippus made by Cicero, Plutarch, and his contemporary Pierre Bayle, aligning himself with the Stoic position. He agreed with the Stoa that sometimes a bad part may make the whole better.⁴⁵ After questioning parts of Lipsius’s account he again aligned himself with Chrysippus, whose cylinder analogy he compared to his own image of a boat carried away down a river, “its pace becoming slower as the load grows heavier”.⁴⁶ He was clearly impressed by what he found in the early Stoa, noting that “if we were sufficiently informed concerning the opinions of ancient philosophers, we should find therein more reason than is supposed”.⁴⁷ However, he also

⁴¹ See Leibniz 1710, reprinted in Leibniz 1875-90: VI, 21-471. See esp. *Théodicée* §§ 331-6 (Leibniz 1710: 520-7; 1875-90: VI, 311-14). On Leibniz’s relationship with Stoicism see e.g. Rutherford 2003 and Forman 2016.

⁴² *Théodicée* § 331 (Leibniz 1710: 520; 1875-90: VI, 311).

⁴³ See *Théodicée* § 332 (Leibniz 1710: 522; 1875-90: VI, 312). Compare with Lipsius 1604b: 35-6, who pointed to Aulus Gellius *NA* “6.2”, but in fact 7.2.7-10 (*SVF* 2.1000), as an important source to supplement to Cicero’s *De fato*, which survives only incomplete.

⁴⁴ See Aulus Gellius *NA* 7.2.7-10 (*SVF* 2.1000).

⁴⁵ See *Théodicée* § 334 (Leibniz 1710: 524; 1875-90: VI, 313). Leibniz refers to Aulus Gellius *NA* “6.1” (i.e. 7.1.2-6 = *SVF* 2.1169) and Plutarch *Comm. not.* 1065d (*SVF* 2.1181).

⁴⁶ See *Théodicée* § 335 (Leibniz 1910: 526; 1875-90: VI, 313-14).

⁴⁷ *Théodicée* § 335 (Leibniz 1710: 526; 1875-90: VI, 314).

acknowledged that none of this could rescue Chrysippus from the objection of necessity.

A good part of Leibniz's discussion of Stoicism in the *Théodicée* was, in effect, an extended discussion with Pierre Bayle. Bayle had written about Stoicism, and in particular an extended entry on Chrysippus, in his *Dictionnaire*, which was first published in 1702.⁴⁸ In this he paid close attention to the doxographical evidence from sources such as Diogenes Laertius and Plutarch, and considered both ancient and modern criticisms. He noted that Plutarch accused Chrysippus of making God, the cause of all things, the author of sin,⁴⁹ and questioned whether Lipsius's attempt to defend him was successful.⁵⁰ As we have seen, Lipsius attempted to defend Chrysippus from the criticisms of Cicero by appealing the account of the cylinder analogy in Aulus Gellius. To this Bayle remarked that the distinction between internal and external causes employed in that analogy does not help here, for everything remains subject to the "unavoidable necessity of fate".⁵¹ In the case of the cylinder, God is the author of both the external push that starts the cylinder moving and the cylinder itself. Thus Chrysippus must "ascribe to Fate all the crimes that Men commit",⁵² and Plutarch's objection stands. Lipsius's solution to the problem was to suggest that the origin of evil was to be found not in God but in the imperfections of matter out of which things

⁴⁸ Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique* went through a number of editions: it was first published in 1697, with a second edition in 1702, both appearing during Bayle's lifetime. Bayle's article on Chrysippus was not in the first edition of 1697 and first appeared in the second edition of 1702 (Bayle 1702: I, 921-31). Further editions of the *Dictionnaire* were issued in 1715, 1720, 1730, 1734, 1738, and 1740, the last of which is the "fifth edition" (in fact, the eighth) and is often taken to be the best of the early editions. In this, the article on Chrysippus is at Bayle 1740: II, 166-75.

⁴⁹ See Plutarch *Comm. not.* 1076b-f (parts in *SVF* 2.1168, 2.937). Bayle refers to another article ("Pauliciens") where he cites Plutarch's passage in full, at Bayle 1702: III, 2328-9.

⁵⁰ Bayle (1702: I, 926, note 'H') refers to Lipsius's *Physiologia Stoicorum* 1.14 (i.e. Lipsius 1604b: 35-9), the same passage discussed by Leibniz. Indeed, Leibniz, may have simply been taking his reference from Bayle.

⁵¹ See Bayle 1702: I, 926, note 'H'.

⁵² *ibid.*

are made,⁵³ but Bayle argued that this failed to address Plutarch's objection; indeed, Plutarch was explicit that matter was not, for the Stoics, the source of evil.⁵⁴ Moreover, given that Chrysippus defined God in a way that made it impossible to distinguish him from Nature, he must by definition be the author of everything that happens in Nature, including moral and physical evil.⁵⁵ Worse still, the Stoic God was both perishable and mutable, subject to periodic conflagration.

Despite having made these points, Bayle was far from quick to condemn either Chrysippus or the Stoics. He argued that Chrysippus wrote so much, and was so embroiled in arguments with Academics such as Carneades, that it should not be surprising if he sometimes made mistakes or fell into contradiction. This is a common flaw of logicians, Bayle argued, who often fail to express themselves clearly in words.⁵⁶ Yet even that may be an unfair judgement, he noted, given that we don't have any complete works by Chrysippus to read in full.⁵⁷ Bayle also commented approvingly on Chrysippus's way of life, noting ancient biographical reports of his chaste and frugal life.⁵⁸ He defended the Stoa as a whole by suggesting that, in any case, Chrysippus was by no means the principal representative of the school. He noted the sparse references to Chrysippus in the works of Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius, implying that the Stoics of antiquity did not hold him up as their authoritative spokesman.⁵⁹ In sum, Chrysippus the dialectician tied himself in knots when it came to questions concerning fate

⁵³ See Lipsius 1604b: 37, cited in Bayle 1702: I, 926, note 'H'.

⁵⁴ See Plutarch *Comm. not.* 1076c-d (*SVF* 2.1168): "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" (trans. Cherniss).

⁵⁵ See Bayle 1702: I, 926.

⁵⁶ See Bayle 1702: I, 928-9. Here Bayle refers to the judgement of Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Comp.* 4 (*SVF* 2.28), on the inelegance of Chrysippus and this being a typical fault of dialecticians.

⁵⁷ See Bayle 1702: I, 930, note 'T'.

⁵⁸ See Bayle 1702: I, 927.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*

and necessity or God and Nature, but he was a morally exemplary figure. His failings were specific to him and ought not to be used to assess Stoicism taken as a whole.

Thus we can see that although Leibniz defended the Stoa against Bayle's criticisms, Bayle was by no means a hostile critic. Leibniz was himself critical of other aspects of Stoic thought, such as the ideal of patience in the face of necessity.⁶⁰ Leibniz also wrote a short essay about the revival of ancient forms of naturalism, namely Epicureanism and Stoicism.⁶¹ In it he described the views of those he called "the new Stoics", suggesting that this new sect was "dangerous to piety", and arguing that, although sometimes expressed in different language, the position of these new Stoics was the same as that of a philosopher whose works had only just been published: Benedict de Spinoza. In this he was once again following Bayle who, in his entry on Spinoza, had identified a wide variety of historical precursors to Spinoza's pantheism, including the Stoics.⁶²

Spinoza is surely the most enigmatic figure in the seventeenth century reception of Stoicism.⁶³ The similarities between his philosophical system and Stoicism have often been noted, yet Spinoza himself mentions the Stoics only a couple of times and always critically.⁶⁴ There is no concrete evidence to suggest a significant Stoic influence on the development of his philosophy, although, as many have noted, Stoic ideas were certainly in the air and

⁶⁰ See *Théodicée* §§ 217 (Leibniz 1710: 395-6; 1875-90: VI, 247-8) and 254 (Leibniz 1710: 435; 1875-90: VI, 267-8).

⁶¹ The essay, untitled, was written in French *c.* 1677-80, can be found in Leibniz 1875-90: VII, 333-6.

⁶² See Bayle 1740: IV, 253, with Piaia and Santinello 2011: 120.

⁶³ See the extended discussion in Miller 2015. Note also James 1993, Long 2003, and Miller 2016.

⁶⁴ See his *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione* § 74 and *Ethica* V Praefatio, in Spinoza 1677: 380 and 233 respectively.

readily accessible.⁶⁵ Spinoza echoed the Stoics in locating God within a unified Nature, conceiving humans as but parts of Nature driven by self-preservation, and advocating a thoroughgoing determinism while resisting fatalism. He also distinguished between good and bad emotions, advocating the elimination of the latter, and imagined an ideal wise person living a life guided by reason. Although he differed from the Stoics on issues such as teleology and providence, the similarities are nevertheless striking. Although Spinoza's passing critical remarks about the Stoics suggest that he had some familiarity with their philosophy, a number of commentators have wondered just how Spinoza managed to develop a philosophical system that shared so much in common with Stoicism. One solution has been to suggest that Spinoza needed only to have reached independently a relatively small number of fundamental "Stoic" premises for his system to develop along remarkably similar lines.⁶⁶

Whether Spinoza himself was influenced by Stoicism or not, his own philosophy soon became closely associated with Stoicism in the minds of his early readers. Before long, Spinoza was dubbed a modern-day Stoic while the Stoics were labelled the Spinozists of antiquity. Drawing on the work of Thomasius, who had shown that the Stoic God was immanent in Nature,⁶⁷ authors such as Bayle and, in particular, Johann Franz Buddeus made the connection between Stoicism and Spinozism. In a pamphlet based on a public debate that took place in 1701 entitled *De Spinozismo ante Spinozam* (1706), Buddeus claimed that of all Greek philosophers the Stoics were the ones who came closest to Spinozism.⁶⁸ Given that he took Spinozism to be a

⁶⁵ The record of Spinoza's library notes two copies of Seneca's *Epistulae* (one in translation) and a copy of Epictetus's *Enchiridion* (in fact, a copy of Simplicius's commentary); see further Miller 2015: 21. The only Stoic that Spinoza ever mentions is Seneca (see e.g. *Ethica* IV Propositio XX Scholium, in Spinoza 1677: 180).

⁶⁶ See e.g. Long 2003: 15 and Miller 2016: 223.

⁶⁷ See Thomasius 1676: 177-226.

⁶⁸ See Buddeus 1706a: 22, reprinted in idem 1706b: 340, which was itself reprinted in 1724. For more on Buddeus as a historian of philosophy see Piaia and Santinello 2011: 343-73. For his role in the present debate see Brooke 2012: 139-48.

form of atheism, this was not a good thing. His polemic was also printed in the same year in his *Analecta Historiae Philosophicae* (1706), which among other things also contained a number of pieces devoted to “De erroribus stoicorum”, based on a series of public debates that took place in the 1690s.⁶⁹ Buddeus’s claims about Stoicism drew on the judgements of Thomasius and Bayle, and, like so many others, he made use of Lipsius’s handbooks. He also wrote an extended essay on Stoicism published as an introduction to Marcus Aurelius, where he attacked Stoic theology once more but conceded that their ethical maxims had some value so long as they were detached from the wider philosophical system.⁷⁰ Before long, Stoicism was regularly associated with both Spinozism and atheism, and this conjunction even became the subject of academic dissertations.⁷¹ Suffice it to say that many of the claims made about Stoicism in this ongoing debate were more concerned with the dangers thought to attend Spinozism than they were with the impartial study of the Stoa.

Not everyone who encountered Stoic ideas during this period automatically associated them with Spinozism or atheism. Readers of the Roman Stoics continued to focus their attention on the practical, ethical side of Stoicism. This is especially evident in the work of Anthony Ashley Cooper, the Third Earl of Shaftesbury. He wrote a series of ethical works that were gathered together and published as *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711). However, his interest in Stoicism only really becomes explicit when turning to a number of unpublished works. These include a short work entitled *Pathologia*, which is a discussion and defence of the Stoic theory of emotions, and the *Askêmata*, a pair of notebooks based on his careful reading

⁶⁹ See Buddeus 1706b: 87-203.

⁷⁰ See Buddeus 1729, noted in Piaia and Santinello 2011: 348, who, later at 361, sum up his attitude: “Buddeus had initially been attracted by many statements made by Seneca and Marcus Aurelius into thinking, with Lipsius, that Stoicism could easily be assimilated to Christian truth. As he came to a deeper understanding of the system, he realised that it was none other than a form of Spinozism.”

⁷¹ See e.g. Burgmann 1721. On the Stoics as atheists see Brooke 2012: 127-48.

of the works of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius.⁷² His notebooks, in large part modelled on Marcus's *Meditations*, were an act of writing to himself and intended as an aid to self-cultivation. As well as reflecting on a range of standard Stoic themes – virtue, the emotions, natural affection, Nature, providence – Shaftesbury also embraced the idea of philosophy as an art of living that he found in Epictetus. Indeed, his notebooks are for the most part a patchwork of quotations from Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, supplemented with his own reflections. Shaftesbury's close attention to these texts is illustrated by the fact that he proposed a number of textual emendations that made it into the notes of John Upton's edition of Epictetus, published in 1739-41.⁷³

Another British philosopher to take inspiration from the Roman Stoics was Francis Hutcheson who, along with James Moor, translated Marcus's *Meditations* into English (1742). Hutcheson had been a keen reader of Shaftesbury and like him admired a variety of aspects of Stoic ethics, as well as the idea of philosophy as an art of self-cultivation.⁷⁴ In particular he shared with Shaftesbury an admiration for the Stoic idea of natural sociability, stressing the ultimate goal of *oikéōsis* (community of humankind) rather than its point of departure (self-preservation). This, he thought, might lay the foundations for an attitude of “calm Benevolence” in place of “selfish Passions”.⁷⁵ However, Hutcheson was by no means committed to the details of early Stoic ethics, and had objections to their account of the emotions reported by Cicero.⁷⁶ It was Marcus's *Meditations* with which he felt the

⁷² Both of these works are preserved in the Public Records Office in Kew, London. For the *Pathologia* see Maurer and Jaffro 2013 and its companion Jaffro, Maurer, and Petit 2013. The *Askēmata* were first published in 1900 and have been re-edited in Ashley Cooper 2011. For discussion see Sellars 2016b.

⁷³ Full details for this and a wide range of other early modern editions and translations of Epictetus can be found in Oldfather 1927.

⁷⁴ See further Maurer 2016, on both Hutcheson and the reception of Stoicism in the Scottish Enlightenment more widely.

⁷⁵ See Hutcheson 1728: xvii.

⁷⁶ See Maurer 2016: 260.

strongest affinity, in particular the stress on a providential deity and the image of society as an organic unity of all humankind.

Others, by contrast, continued the hard work of trying to reconstruct the views of the early Hellenistic Stoa. The culmination of the scholarly reception of Stoicism during the early modern period came in Jacob Brucker's monumental *Historia Critica Philosophiae*, first published in the 1740s and revised in the 1760s.⁷⁷ Brucker had been a pupil of Buddeus. For Brucker "the Stoics" were first and foremost the early Athenian Stoics: Zeno and his immediate disciples, Chrysippus, Panaetius, and Posidonius.⁷⁸ Indeed, he explicitly warned against taking the Roman Stoics such as Seneca and Epictetus as adequate guides to comprehending Stoic philosophy. It is worth quoting from Brucker at length:

Great care should be taken, in the first place, not to judge of the doctrine of the Stoics from words and sentiments, detached from the general system, but to consider them as they stand related to the whole train of premises and conclusions. For want of this caution, many moderns, dazzled by the splendid expressions which they have met with in the writings of Stoics concerning God, the soul, and other subjects, have imagined that they have discovered an invaluable treasure: whereas, if they had taken the pains to restore these brilliants to their proper places in the general mass, it would soon have appeared, that a great part of their value was imaginary.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ See Brucker 1766-67, which expands on the earlier edition by including a new sixth volume of additions and emendations. For an overview of his work see Piaia and Santinello 2011: 479-577.

⁷⁸ See Brucker 1766-67: I, 893-981.

⁷⁹ Brucker 1766-67: I, 909. I quote from the (paraphrased) translation made by William Enfield 1791: I, 321.

He went on to tackle the ever-controversial doctrine of fate. For Zeno and Chrysippus, fate is “an eternal and immutable series of causes and effects, within which all events are included, and to which the Deity himself is subject”.⁸⁰ Brucker contrasted this with the view of the Roman Stoics, who “changing the term Fate into The Providence of God, discoursed with great plausibility on this subject, but still in reality retained the ancient doctrine of universal fate”.⁸¹ Thus Brucker found himself still caught within the debate shaped by Lipsius at the beginning of the previous century. Where Brucker differed, though, was in claiming that Roman Stoic references to providence and a personalist God were deliberate attempts at dissimulation in the wake of Christianity:

Any one who attentively examines the writings of the philosophers after the promulgation of the Christian doctrine, will perceive that the Stoics, in order to support the credit of their system, artfully accommodated their language, and even their tenets as far as they were able, to the Christian model.⁸²

While one might dispute a good number of Brucker’s claims, his history would prove highly influential. It would become a standard work of reference and an important source of information for thinkers such as Denis Diderot and Immanuel Kant.

Among the French *philosophes* it was Diderot who perhaps paid most attention to Stoicism.⁸³ He was the author of the article on Stoicism in the *Encyclopédie* and he also wrote at length about Seneca. His article in the

⁸⁰ Brucker 1766-67: I, 910 (Enfield 1791: I, 322).

⁸¹ Brucker 1766-67: I, 910 (Enfield 1791: I, 322).

⁸² Brucker 1766-67: I, 910 (Enfield 1791: I, 321-2).

⁸³ For an overview of Stoicism in the French Enlightenment see Andrew 2016.

Encyclopédie, it has been claimed, relied heavily on Brucker's account.⁸⁴ Like Buddeus, Diderot presented the Stoics as materialists and, ultimately, atheists, but of course this was no longer necessarily intended as a criticism.⁸⁵ He continued with his interest in Stoicism in his *Essai sur la vie de Sénèque le philosophe, sur ses écrits, et sur les règnes de Claude et de Néron*, first published in 1779 as a companion volume to a translation of Seneca's works into French, and re-issued independently in 1789.⁸⁶ Diderot's aim was to defend Seneca from the widely made charges of hypocrisy that even Diderot himself had once made.⁸⁷ It was, in part, intended as a response to Julien Offray de la Mettrie's *Anti-Seneque*, another production made to accompany a translation of Seneca, and published in 1748.⁸⁸ It was also a response to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's isolationist approach to the idea of living in harmony with Nature.⁸⁹ Diderot was also attempting to defend himself against charges of fraternising with a despotic ruler, in his case Catherine the Great. The boundaries between Seneca, the ideal of the Enlightenment *philosophe*, and Diderot himself were deliberately blurred. What Seneca offered was an image of an all too human philosopher, one who was actively engaged in the world, although not always living up to his professed ideals.⁹⁰ He championed virtue, not pleasure, and his regular references to God and providence chimed with Enlightenment deism. Having said that, the essay was primarily a defence of Seneca, not Stoicism, and Diderot criticized Stoic

⁸⁴ See Piaia and Santinello 2011:557 where it is suggested that the article on Stoicism in the *Encyclopédie* was "drawn almost entirely" from Brucker.

⁸⁵ See Diderot and d'Alembert 1751-65: XV, 528, where the Stoics are described as materialists, fatalists, and strictly speaking atheists. Elsewhere in the *Encyclopédie*, in the lengthy article on Spinoza, Spinoza is presented as an atheist and then aligned with the Stoics (see Diderot and d'Alembert 1751-65: XV, 463).

⁸⁶ I have consulted the first independent edition, Diderot 1789. A revised and expanded version was also published in 1782, under the title *Essai sur les règnes de Claude et de Néron, et sur les mœurs et les écrits de Sénèque*.

⁸⁷ See Diderot 1745: 288-90, in a footnote to his translation of Shaftesbury.

⁸⁸ See e.g. Diderot 1789: 262-3. On both La Mettrie and Diderot see Andrew 2016: 245-7.

⁸⁹ On Rousseau's relationship with Stoicism see e.g. Roche 1974 and Brooke 2012: 181-202. On Diderot and Rousseau see Andrew 2016: 248-9.

⁹⁰ See e.g. Diderot 1789: 201.

doctrine on a number of points. He was especially dismissive of the Stoic account of emotions that Seneca had outlined in *De ira*, arguing that the emotions were essential, natural, and could have both positive as well as negative consequences.⁹¹ Thus Diderot rejected those parts of Seneca's work that he disliked, while at the same time defending the man himself. Seneca was being disassociated from Stoicism.

Diderot was not the only person whose knowledge of Stoicism owed a debt to Brucker; Immanuel Kant also read the *Historia Critica Philosophiae* and it has been suggested that much of Kant's knowledge of ancient philosophy came from Brucker's history.⁹² Indeed, Kant notes Brucker's criticisms of Plato in the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1781).⁹³ However, his own philosophical engagement with Stoicism was in some respects far more old fashioned. It has been claimed, for instance, that his own ethics drew heavily on Cicero's *De officiis*,⁹⁴ leading to certain affinities between Stoic and Kantian ethics that have often been noted.⁹⁵ His lectures on ethics also show that he had a good grasp of Stoic ethics and its place within the wider history of ancient ethics.⁹⁶

Like the Stoics, Kant placed the highest good inside the agent, in his case in a good will. In his *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (1788) he affirmed the Stoic

⁹¹ See Diderot 1789: 332-3.

⁹² Piaia and Santinello 2011:556 suggest that Kant "drew a large part of his knowledge of ancient philosophy from the *Historia critica*".

⁹³ See Kant 1781: 316.

⁹⁴ See Reich 1939 and DesJardins 1967. Kant read Cicero's *De officiis* in the German translation by Christian Garve, first published in 1783, and Garve's commentary on Cicero's account of Stoic duties may well have influenced the development of Kant's own theory of duty. See Doyle and Torralba 2016: 279-80.

⁹⁵ See e.g. Schneewind 1996. For further discussion and references see Doyle and Torralba 2016.

⁹⁶ See, for example, the notes on Kant's lectures on ethics from 1784-5 recorded by Georg Ludwig Collins, in Kant 1910-: XXVII, 247-52.

view that external misfortunes ought never to be accounted evils.⁹⁷ Such things can never compromise one's virtue. However, he doubted the Stoic claim that happiness was, in effect, a natural concomitant of virtue.⁹⁸ Instead he insisted that the maxims of virtue and happiness are heterogeneous and one cannot be deduced from the other; consequently the problem of reconciling morality with happiness remains. Thus, while Kant thought that Stoic ethics contained much in it to admire, ultimately he thought that it failed to deliver a completely convincing position.

A little later, in his *Die Metaphysic der Sitten* (1797), Kant commented on the process by which people acquire virtue. There he explicitly followed the Stoics in saying that virtue cannot be taught by concepts or principles alone, it also involved exercise or training.⁹⁹ In the following year, in his *Der Streit der Fakultäten* (1798), Kant described Stoicism as not merely a doctrine of virtue but also a science of medicine.¹⁰⁰ Unlike empirical medicine, which relies on drugs or surgery, Kant defined Stoicism as a philosophical medicine that can offer therapy for ills by the power of reason alone. The Ciceronian image of Stoic philosophy as an *animi medicina* had not been forgotten.

The period stretching from Lipsius to Kant was a highpoint in the recovery and reception of Stoicism, but it also involved some dramatic shifts in perception. As we have seen, they were repeatedly drawn into contemporary philosophical disputes and were read and reinterpreted in the light of those controversies. At the beginning of the period Stoicism was more often than not presented as an austere and noble ethical outlook, broadly compatible with Christian teaching. By the end, in the wake of both scholarly work

⁹⁷ See Kant 1788: 106 (Kant 1910-: V, 60), silently drawing on an anecdote about Posidonius reported in Cicero, *Tusc.* 2.61.

⁹⁸ See Kant 1788: 202 (Kant 1910-: V, 112).

⁹⁹ See Kant 1797: 163-4 (Kant 1910-: VI, 477).

¹⁰⁰ See Kant 1798: 172-3 (Kant 1910-: VII, 100-1).

reconstructing the views of the early Stoa and the impact of Spinoza's philosophy, it was clear that this was simply not the case. Both critics and admirers could now see that Seneca's endless references to God and providence could quite easily be replaced with a thoroughly naturalistic account of the world making reference only to Nature and fate. By the end of the early modern period, the Stoics had, in one sense, themselves become modern. Yet the older image of Stoicism as a practical ethic of self-cultivation did not go away either, and the works of the Roman Stoics continued to be read widely.

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