Diseases of Soul in Stoic Psychology

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As late as 1952 W. W. Tarn could write that in the Hellenistic period “Aristotle’s school loses all importance.” As for philosophical influences, he says, the Stoics and Epicureans went back behind Plato and Aristotle to Socrates. In the subsequent three decades, however, historians of philosophy have gained new insights into the nature of Hellenistic philosophy by studying the direct influence of Aristotle upon the later schools. Today, few would disagree with John Rist that the phrase ‘post-Aristotelian philosophy’ most truly refers to philosophy that is dominated by Aristotle and not merely posterior to him. In this paper I wish to analyze the Stoics’ notion of a disease of soul and suggest that an apparent contradiction in their theory may best be resolved by proper attention to Aristotelian precedents and possible influences. The problem to be considered here may be simply put: the Stoics sometimes identify diseases of soul with the pathē (passions, affections, emotions); at other times they seem to deny that diseases are pathē and insist rather that they are hexeis (dispositions).

Commentators have not taken note of the full extent of the problem and generally designate either pathē or hexeis as psychic diseases. For example, Paul Barth says only: “So mit ist der Affekt als übermässiger Trieb eine Störung und Krankheit des Seelenlebens...” Rist, Graeser, and Kidd all take the same position and refer to Cicero’s De finibus 3.10.35 in support of the proposition that in Greek pathos may mean ‘disease’. An example of such a disease-passion would be anger, which the Stoics characterized as the desire to punish an apparent wrongdoer (SVF III 397, 398 [pp.96f]). Émile Bréhier, on the other hand, argues that

1 Hellenistic Civilisation (New York 1952) 325.
2 Tarn (supra n.1) 328.
5 Paul Barth, Die Stoa (Stuttgart 1922) 62.
the passions must be clearly distinguished from the diseases of soul: “La passion, phénomène rapide et vif, différerá toujours des maladies et des vices qui sont des phénomènes permanents.”

So too Max Pohlenz and Adolf Dyroff: indeed, Dyroff defines a disease of soul as “eine falsche Meinung, die in die Eigenschaft (έξες) einer Begierde ausgeartet und tief eingewurzelt ist.” An example of such a hexis is the state of irascibility or iracundia, which according to Cicero the Stoics sharply set apart from the pathos anger: *in aliis iracundia dicitur. quae ab ira differt, estque aliud iracundum esse, aliud iratum... (Tusc. 4.12.27).* In other words, Barth, Rist, Graeser, and Kidd maintain that diseases of soul are psychic affections (*pathē*). According to Bréhier, Pohlenz, and Dyroff they are dispositions. Which, then, is the disease in Cicero’s illustrations from the *De finibus* and *Tusculan Disputations*? Is it the anger, the irascibility, or both? The evidence in the fragments, as we shall see, is confusing and contradictory.

There can be no doubt that the Stoics recognized the fundamental Aristotelian distinction between a *pathos* and a *hexis*. According to Aristotle, men are moved (*κινεῖσθαι, Eth. Nic. 1106a5*) in respect of the *pathē*, but disposed in certain ways (*διακεῖσθαι πως, 1106a6, a11–12*) or qualified somehow (*ποιοί τινες, Cat. 8b25*) by virtue of *hexeis*. Examples of *pathē* include desire (*ἐπιθυμία*), anger (*δρῆ*), and fear (*φόβος*)—in general the feelings that are accompanied by pleasure (*ἡδονή*) and pain (*λύπη, cf. Eth. Nic. 1105b21–23*). The class of *hexeis* contains the virtues, vices, and branches of knowledge (Cat. 8b29). An important aspect of the distinction between *pathē* and *hexeis* is that the latter are stable and of long duration (Cat. 9a4–5); as the former involve motion they flare up, abate, and vanish. For according to Aristotle the *pathē* arise from circumstances that easily fluctuate and quickly change (Cat. 9b28–29). *Pathē* and *hexeis* differ in the extent to which they involve a thing’s own being in their qualification, and in “the permanence or transitoriness, the necessity or accidental character, of the inherence of the predicate in the subject.” Furthermore, Aristotle recognizes a causal relationship between at least some *pathē* and some *hexeis*. He states that *hexeis* tend toward the very things by which they are brought about (ὑφ’ ὁν... γίνονται, ὅτι τούτων

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7 Chrysippe et l’ancien stoïcisme (Paris 1951) 254.
πρακτικαί (καὶ) καθ’ αὐτάς, Eth. Nic. 1114b27–28). What this means in concrete terms can be made clear through a simple example. Repeated experience of the passion anger (δρυή) engenders the vice irascibility (κακία δρυιλότης), 1108a7–8), which then manifests itself in further episodes of anger. Aristotle never loses sight of the basic differences between pathē and hexeis. Thus he feels justified in excluding shame (αιδός) from the list of virtues because it is a pathos and therefore cannot, like virtue, be a hexis (1128b10–11).

I would argue that the Stoics borrowed much from Aristotle regarding the psychology of emotions and dispositions. As evidence, there is first of all the passage in which Cicero insists upon the distinction between ira and iracundia (Tusc. 4.12.27). Second, Stobaeus maintains that irascibility (δρυιλότης) is a tendency (εὐκαταφοράν) toward pathos (Ecl. 2.93.1 [SVF III 421 (p.102)]). Third, the Stoics defined a pathos as an impulse (δρυιήν) or, along more recognizably Aristotelian lines, as a movement (κίνησιν) of the soul (Stob. Ecl. 2.88.6 [SVF III 378 (p.92)]). Moreover, the names of the four generic pathē recall Aristotle’s examples listed above: pleasure (ἡδονή), pain (λύπη), desire (ἐπιθυμία), and fear (φόβος), cf. SVF III 387–88 [p.94]).

Stoic psychology probably stands in sharpest contrast to Aristotle in the doctrine that the pathē are judgements (δόξαι or κρίσεις). Yet here the influence of Aristotle can be easily detected. For the Stoics formulated a doctrine of dispositional and occurrent judgements—causally linked one to the other—which is obviously modeled upon the passages from the Nicomachean Ethics discussed above. The pathē, we have seen, involve movement; they were also represented as ‘recent’ (recens, Cic. Tusc. 3.11.25) or ‘fresh’ (πρόσφατος): according to Stobaeus, this qualification was intended to indicate their kinetic or occurrent nature. Further-

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11 Aristotle disagrees with the Stoics, however, on the nature of pleasure. For him it is not a κίνησις: cf. Eth. Nic. 1174a13–21.

12 Cf. SVF III 456f (p.110). Individual Stoics disagreed on the details of this theory. Zeno seems to have held that the pathē supervene upon judgements (SVF I 209). According to Chrysippus, the pathē were themselves judgements. This disagreement is irrelevant here, since in both cases the pathē are viewed as occurrences.

13 Ecl. 2.88.6 (SVF III 378 [p.92]). Bréhier (supra n.7) 254, summarizes the matter nicely: “la passion est un jugement récent sur le bien et le mal: ‘récent’, c’est-à-dire non habituel, provoqué sur le champ par la représentation actuelle; ce n’est donc pas à proprement parler une manière d’être, mais un mouvement, un trouble.”
more, these occurrent judgements are causally related to dispositional judgements, which, once formed, are very difficult to eradicate. At this point, we approach the Stoic doctrine of a disease of soul; Cicero identifies psychic illness with these ingrained, dispositional judgements:

Ex perturbationibus [=pathē, cf. Fin. 3.35] autem primum morbi conficiuntur, quae vocant illi vosēματα. . . . Intellegetur igitur perturbationem iactantibus se opinionibus inconstanter et turbide in motu esse semper; cum autem hic fervor conciatioque animi inveteravit et tamquam in venis medullisque insedit, tum existit et morbus et aegrotatio. . . . Haec, quae dico, cogitatione inter se different, re quidem copulata sunt, eaque orientur ex libidine et ex laetitia. Nam cum est concupita pecunia nec adhibita continuo ratio quasi quaedam Socratica medicina, quae sanaret eam cupiditatem, permanat in venas et inhaeret in visceribus illud malum, existitque morbus et aegrotatio, quae evelli inveterata non possunt, eique morbo nomen est avaritia. . . .

The passion 'desire for money' (cupiditas or φιλοχρηματία, SVF III 397 [p.97]) gives rise to the dispositional judgement called 'avarice' (avaritia or φιλαργυρία, SVF III 104 [p.25]). (In the same way anger breeds irascibility.) According to Cicero avarice is defined as: opinatio vehemens de pecunia, quasi valde expetenda sit, inhaerens et penitus insita (Tusc. 4.11.26). Moreover, Stobaeus confirms the general picture in Cicero when he lists avarice (φιλαργυρία) among the diseases (vosēματα). Yet he goes a step further by listing these diseases among the tendencies or dispositions which are hexeis (Ecl. 2.70.21 [SVF III 104 (p.25)]). It seems, therefore, that diseases of soul are hexeis rather than pathē. Nevertheless, Barth's equation of disease and pathos finds support in the ancient testimonies—even in the works of Cicero himself. The Stoic theory of a disease of soul is more complex than has been realized.

Cicero's Tusculan Disputations is our major source for the full

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14 Tusc. 4.10.23–24 (SVF III 424 [p.103]). Cicero in this passage distinguishes morbus (=νόσος) from aegrotatio (=ἀρρωστήματα), which is 'disease with weakness'. Cf. Stob. Ecl. 2.93.1 (SVF III 421 [pp.102f]).

15 Avarice (φιλαργυρία or avaritia) is a disease; the desire for money (φιλοχρηματία or cupiditas pecuniae) is a pathos. I believe that the Stoics were careful to distinguish the two and that Tusc. Book 4 reflects this meticulous discrimination. However, in the hands of later, often hostile commentators the distinction became blurred: so Diog.Laert. 7.111 (SVF III 456 [p.110]) calls φιλαργυρία a pathos; similarly Galen (SVF III 480 [p.130]) says that both φιλοχρηματία and φιλαργυρία are ἀρρωστήματα (diseases with weakness).
Stoic theory of passions and dispositions. Yet two contradictory accounts of psychic disease are presented. In Book 3 Cicero equates diseases of soul with the passions—the thesis of Barth and others—when he reports that philosophers call the emotions diseases: omnes autem perturbationes animi morbos philosophi appellant (3.4.9, cf. Fin. 3.10.35). This position he later attributes to the Stoics (Tusc. 3.6.13). Moreover, from the subsequent discussion it is clear that the diseases meant are the four generic pathē of pain, pleasure, desire, and fear (3.11.24). Now this account of the pathē as diseases seems coherent and unproblematical when viewed in isolation. The difficulty arises when these passages are set against the theory presented in Book 4, which requires further examination.

Discussing the emotional psychology of Chrysippus, Cicero now finds two reasons for denying that the passions are diseases of soul. First, diseases are abiding dispositions (adfectiones . . . manentes) or hexeis. The pathē, on the other hand, are occurrences. They consist in motion: perturbationes autem moventes (4.13.29–30). Second, Cicero sketches the causal theory of the relationship between pathē and diseases, already described above: passions engender diseases and these in turn bring further passions. How, then, are we to explain the contradiction between Books 3 and 4 of the Tusculan Disputations? I offer four possible solutions to this problem, recognizing however that none of them can be judged certain.

The first and simplest solution would be to accuse Cicero of misunderstanding at some point. Thus several commentators have sought to undermine the equation of pathos with disease in Book 3 in order to save the dispositional theory of Book 4. Dougan and Henry, for example, assert flatly that Cicero is incorrect in Book 3 when he chooses to translate Greek pathos as Latin morbus. Thus they hope to remove the problem with a single stroke. Unfortunately, this simple solution fails because the doctrine that the passions are diseases is not unique here: Cicero repeats the idea at De finibus 3.10.35; at Acad. Post. 1.10.38 he attributes the doctrine expressly to Zeno. Moreover, independent confirmation can

16 adfectio most often means hexis, 'disposition', in Cicero: in addition to the passage cited here, cf. Tusc. 4.15.34, 4.24.53, 5.14.41. Sometimes, however, it translates pathos (so Tusc. 4.6.14, Inv. Rhet. 1.25.36); the reader must rely upon context to determine which is meant.

be obtained from Lactantius, who reports that Zeno placed the passion *misericordia* among the faults and diseases (*inter vitia et morbos*, SVF I 213). Likewise, it appears equally impossible to disregard or explain away the dispositional account of psychic disease presented in Book 4; it is supported by too many sources independent of Cicero. Thus Stobaeus, as we have seen, places diseases of soul among the *hexeis* in his three-fold classification of goods and evils: *diatheseis* (virtues and vices), *hexeis* (skills and dispositions), and *energeiai* (activities in accordance with virtue and vice, *cf.* Ecl. 2.70.21). Second, Diogenes Laertius says that the diseases are tendencies (*ἐνεργειαί*, 7.115 [SVF III 422 (p.103)]). Plutarch tells us that the passions, on the other hand, are *energeiai* (Mor. 446F [SVF III 459 (p.111)]. That is, they are neither *diatheseis* nor *hexeis*. 18

A second approach might be to suppose a certain looseness of terminology on the part of the Stoics. Words like νόσος, νόσμα, and *morbus* might well have been applied to both *pathē* and *hexeis*, however much the Stoics sought to distinguish the two in other respects. After all, both *pathē* and *hexeis* were sometimes defined as judgements—the former occurrent and the latter dispositional—so that the two have at least this much in common: perhaps the term ‘disease’ was considered a fitting common designation of all defective judgements. Although such a hypothesis cannot be discounted entirely, a solution preferable to all these terminological entanglements would be one explaining how Cicero might both affirm and deny that the passions are diseases.

A third solution to these difficulties has the merit of explaining the confusion in Cicero: perhaps the Stoics themselves disagreed on the question whether the passions should be included among the diseases. As a result, Cicero might have derived his material for the two accounts from conflicting sources. There can be little doubt that Chrysippus is the author of the dispositional theory in Book 4; Cicero implies as much (at 4.10.23). 19 On the other hand, both Cicero and Lactantius, as we have seen, confirm the thesis

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18 The classification of *energeiai* includes both actions in accordance with virtue and vice and also the passions: *cf.* Stob. Ecl. 2.70.21f ([SVF III 104 and 106 (p.25)]. For as Simplicius says, motion is a common factor of doing (*τοῦ ποιεῖν*) and suffering (*τοῦ πάθειν*, SVF II 497).

19 Rudolf Hirzel, *Untersuchungen zu Ciceros philosophischen Schriften* III (Leipzig 1883) 459, attempted to derive the contents of both 3 and 4 from Philo; J. von Arnim was rightly critical, SVF I xx. As for the dispositional theory of psychic illness advanced in Book 4, Dougan and Henry (*supra* n.17) xlvi remark correctly: “There is . . . no ground for assuming any except a Chrysippean source for these chapters.”
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that for Zeno the passions are diseases. No certainty is possible in the matter because the Tusculan Disputations is a contamination of so many divergent sources. However, the contradiction between Books 3 and 4 would be neatly explained on the hypothesis that Cicero employed Zeno as his source for the theory in 3 and Chrysippus in 4.

A fourth and final solution to the conflicts in our sources hinges upon a possible ambiguity in the Stoic theory of what constitutes a pathos. Passions are transitory occurrences or movements of soul; therefore they cannot be considered diseases because diseases are abiding dispositions arising from such passions. Nevertheless, there is some slight evidence in the fragments for a class of dispositional passions which meets the two criteria for inclusion among the diseases of soul. And once again the grounds for a Stoic theory of dispositional passions seem to have been prepared beforehand—or at least anticipated—by Aristotle.

‘Quality’ and ‘affection’ are labels for two of Aristotle’s ten categories. Hexeis, we have seen, fall into the category of quality and are to be distinguished from pathê or affections. Yet Aristotle believed that some pathê are also qualities. That is, to the question “How qualified?” “Angry” might sometimes be an appropriate answer. Thus Aristotle mentions the pathê along with the hexeis in the category of quality (Cat. 9a29). So anger (ðρυή) may be appropriately included in a list of qualities (Cat. 10a1) as well as in a list of affections (Eth.Nic. 1105b22). Under what circumstances might anger be judged a quality? According to W. F. R. Hardie: “Being angry in an occurrent sense is not a quality.... But ‘angry’ has itself a dispositional as well as an occurrent sense. When we say that Smith is angry with Brown we need not be implying that Smith is now thinking of Brown and feeling hot under the collar; Smith may be asleep or attending to something else.” Hardie bolsters his interpretation with an allusion to the Eudemian Ethics (1220b11–20), where Aristotle remarks that when the affection is thought of as an occurrent transaction in which the subject is passive, it is not a quality.20 In short, the notion of a pathos is an ambiguous one in Aristotle.

In the Stoic fragments, there is some trace of this Aristotelian ambiguity in the treatment of the pathê. I wish to suggest that when the Stoics thought of a pathos as an occurrent transaction—a movement, impulse, or occurrent judgement—they classified it

20 Hardie (supra n.9) 95–96.
not as a disease but as a breeder of such diseases. A dispositional *pathos*, on the other hand, would have been included among diseases of soul along with the stable and enduring dispositional judgements or *hexeis*. This hypothesis, then, presupposes the existence of three distinct psychic entities. For example, A’s case of occurrent anger focused upon B might result in a lasting state of dispositional anger against B. (Both occurrent and dispositional anger must be linked to actual presentations of objects in the real world in order to qualify as *pathē*.)

Alternatively, occurrent or dispositional anger might engender the generalized state of irascibility, which is not tied to an actual presentation. (That is, A may be angry with B, but certainly never irascible with him.) Dispositional *pathē*, then, are a natural bridge between *pathē* and *hexeis*, since they share equally in the characteristics of both. If the Stoics recognized the existence of such a class of entities, it is little wonder that Cicero is confused about whether *pathē* are to be classified as diseases.

Some evidence for a theory of dispositional *pathē* among the Stoics can be found in Galen. Among the passages which von Arnim judged “ad cognoscendam Chrysippi doctrinam utilia” (*SVF* I v), we read the following:

κινήσεως δ’ οὖσας κατὰ γένος διττῆς, ἀλλοιώσεως τε καὶ φοράς, δειν εἰς μόνιμον ἀφικηταί διάβεσιν ἢ ἀλλοίωσις, ὄνομα­ζεται νόσημα, παρὰ φύσιν οὖσα δηλονότι διάθεσις. καταχρόμενοι δ’ ἐνίοτε καὶ τὴν τοιαύτην διάθεσιν ὄνομαζουσιν (ὄνομαζουσιν Kühn) πάθος.

Motion being of two sorts, alteration and change of place, when the alteration becomes an abiding disposition, it is named disease, being clearly a disposition contrary to nature. And sometimes, misapplying the term, we speak of such a disposition [*i.e.* a disease] as a *pathos*.22

This fragment cannot be definitely assigned to Chrysippus nor to any Stoic. For the ‘we’ or ‘they’ of whom Galen speaks in the last sentence represent only the normal *λέξεις Ἑλλήνων* employed by surgeons and philosophers. Nevertheless the theory has a pro-

21 Cf. Bréhier (*supra* n.13).

22 *De locis affectis* 1.3 (*SVF* III 429 [p.105]). Actually the word *diathesis* here does not accord well with the strictest Stoic usage; the Stoics normally employed it to designate only the dispositions virtue and vice. They seem to have reserved the word *hexis* for other kinds of dispositions such as diseases of soul; *cf.* Stob. *Ecl.* 2.70.21 (*SVF* III 104 [p.25]). See Rist (*supra* n.4) 3.
nounced Stoic flavor for two reasons. First, it accords with the
evidence of Cicero, Diogenes Laertius, and Stobaeus regarding the
dispositional nature of disease for the Stoics. But more impor-
tantly, the fragment echoes Book 3 of the Tusculan Disputations,
linking the concepts of pathos and disease. That is, Galen tells us
that the term pathos was sometimes extended to cover stable states
of long duration. Aristotle’s dispositional passions provide an
obvious instance of such an extension of the primary meaning of
pathos. Cicero’s disease-passions in Book 3 of the Tusculan Dispu-
tations may well be a second example. In other words, Cicero may
have been thinking of the Stoic dispositional pathē when he wrote,

omnes autem perturbationes animi morbos philosophi appellant
(Tusc. 3.4.9). On the other hand, occurrent pathē are not diseases,
for they involve motion. With this in mind Cicero wrote, vitia [of
which diseases are part] enim adfectiones sunt manentes, pertur-

bationes autem moventes, ut non possint adfectionum manentium

 partes esse (4.13.30). This fourth solution has the added merit of
incorporating dispositional passions into the framework of Stoic
psychology.

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23 Cf. De locis affectis 1.3: όστε δι' τις ἐπηταὶ τῇ λέξει τῶν Ἑλλήνων, πάσχειν μᾶλλον ἐρεί
tά μόρα, καθ' ἀπερ δι' ὧσι κινήσεις παρὰ φύσιν, ὡς τά γε διαθέσεις ἔχονα παρά φύσιν, ἔν
μὲν κυρίως ὁμοια, νοσείν μᾶλλον ἂ πάσχειν ἐρεί, καταχρόμενος οὐ νοσείν μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ

πάσχειν. For Galen’s definition of a diathesis cf. 1.1. The reader might object that Galen is
discussing pathē of the body and not of the soul; therefore his observations are not valid for
a theory of psychic illness. On the contrary, Cicero stresses that the Stoics, especially
Chrysippus, expended much effort in finding similarities between diseases of the body and
of the soul (Tusc. 4.10.23, cf. 4.13.28–31). In his own major work on the passions of the
soul Galen says little about psychic disease, remarking only at one point that anger (τὸν
θυμὸν) is a disease (νόσημα) of the soul: cf. Anim.Pass. 1, 5. Such a usage exemplifies the
mild catachresis discussed in the above passage from the De locis affectis.

24 I would like to thank the anonymous reader of GRBS for several helpful suggestions.