

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.”¹ As for philosophical influences, he says, the Stoics and Epicureans went back behind Plato and Aristotle to Socrates.² 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.³ 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.⁴ 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: “Somit ist der Affekt als übermässiger Trieb eine Störung und Krankheit des Seelenlebens. . . .”⁵ 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’.⁶ 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*³ (New York 1952) 325.

² Tarn (*supra* n.1) 328.

³ Cf. A. A. Long, “Aristotle’s Legacy to Stoic Ethics,” *BICS* 15 (1968) 72–73.

⁴ J. M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (Cambridge 1969) 1.

⁵ Paul Barth, *Die Stoa*⁴ (Stuttgart 1922) 62.

⁶ Rist (*supra* n.4) 26; Andreas Graeser, *Zenon von Kition. Positionen und Probleme* (Berlin 1975) 152 n.24; I. G. Kidd, “Posidonius on Emotions,” *Problems in Stoicism*, ed. A. A. Long (London 1971) 214 and n.26.

the passions must be clearly distinguished from the diseases of soul: “La passion, phénomène rapide et vif, différera toujours des maladies et des vices qui sont des phénomènes permanents.”⁷ So too Max Pohlenz and Adolf Dyroff: indeed, Dyroff defines a disease of soul as “eine falsche Meinung, die in die Eigenschaft (ἔξις) einer Begierde ausgeartet und tief eingewurzelt ist.”⁸ 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 πῶς*, 1106a6, a11–12) or qualified somehow (*ποιοί τινες*, *Cat.* 8b25) by virtue of *hexeis*. Examples of *pathē* include desire (*ἐπιθυμία*), anger (*ὀργή*), 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.”⁹ 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 (*ὅφ’ ὧν . . . γίνονται, ὅτι τούτων*

⁷ *Chrysippe et l’ancien stoïcisme*² (Paris 1951) 254.

⁸ Max Pohlenz, *Die Stoa: Geschichte einer geistigen Bewegung*⁴ (Göttingen 1970) I 148 and II 80–83. Adolf Dyroff, *Die Ethik der alten Stoa* (Berlin 1897) 163.

⁹ H. H. Joachim, *Aristotle, The Nicomachean Ethics* (Oxford 1951) 82; *cf.* W. F. R. Hardie, *Aristotle’s Ethical Theory* (Oxford 1968) 96.

πρακτικαὶ <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 (*ὀργή*) engenders the vice irascibility (*κακία ὀργιλότης*, 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 (*αἰδώς*) 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 (*ὀργιλότητα*) is a tendency (*εὐκαταφορίαν*) toward *pathos* (*Ecl.* 2.93.1 [SVF III 421 (p.102)]). Third, the Stoics defined a *pathos* as an impulse (*ὀρμήν*) or, along more recognizably Aristotelian lines, as a movement (*κίνησιν*) of the soul (*Stob. Ecl.* 2.88.6 [SVF III 378 (p.92)]).¹⁰ 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]).¹¹

Stoic psychology probably stands in sharpest contrast to Aristotle in the doctrine that the *pathē* are judgements (*δόξαι* or *κρίσεις*).¹² 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.¹³ Further-

¹⁰ A. C. Lloyd lists five other Aristotelian features of emotions that recur in Stoic psychology: "Emotion and Decision in Stoic Psychology," *The Stoics*, ed. John M. Rist (Berkeley 1978), 235.

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 νοσήματα. . . . Intellegatur igitur perturbationem iactantibus se opinionibus inconstanter et turbide in motu esse semper; cum autem hic fervor concitatioque animi inveteravit et tamquam in venis medullisque insedit, tum existit et morbus et aegrotatio. . . . Haec, quae dico, cogitatione inter se differunt, re quidem copulata sunt, eaque oriuntur 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. . . .*¹⁴

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: *opinio 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 (*νοσήματα*).¹⁵ 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

¹⁴ *Tusc.* 4.10.23–24 (SVF III 424 [p.103]). Cicero in this passage distinguishes *morbus* (=νόσος) from *aegrotatio* (=ἀρρώστημα), 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*.¹⁶ 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 *morbis*.¹⁷ 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.

¹⁷ Thomas W. Dougan and Robert M. Henry, *M. Tulli Ciceronis, Tusculanarum Disputationum Libri Quinque* II (Cambridge 1934) 9: “*morbis* translates νόσος not πάθος.”

be obtained from Lactantius, who reports that Zeno placed the passion *miseritordia* 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 (*εὐκαταφορίαι*, 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*, *νόσημα*, and *morbis* 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

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 feature of doing (*τοῦ ποιεῖν*) and suffering (*τοῦ πάσχειν*, 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.”

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 *pathē* or affections. Yet Aristotle believed that some *pathē* are also qualities. That is, to the question “How qualified?” “Angry” might sometimes be an appropriate answer. Thus Aristotle mentions the *pathē* along with the *hexeis* in the category of quality (*Cat.* 9a29). So anger (*ὀργή*) 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 *pathē*. 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*.)²¹ 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' οὔσης κατὰ γένος διττῆς, ἀλλοιώσεώς τε καὶ φορᾶς, ὅταν εἰς μόνιμον ἀφίκηται διάθεσιν ἢ ἀλλοίωσις, ὀνομάζεται νόσημα, παρὰ φύσιν οὔσα δηλονότι διάθεσις. καταχρώμενοι δ' ἐνίοτε καὶ τὴν τοιαύτην διάθεσιν ὀνομάζομεν (ὀνομάζουσιν 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 λέξις 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 importantly, 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.²³ 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 Disputations* 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, perturbationes 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.²⁴

THE UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY
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²³ Cf. *De locis affectis* 1.3: ὥστε ἂν τις ἐπιηται τῇ λέξει τῶν Ἑλλήνων, πάσχειν μᾶλλον ἐρεῖ τὰ μόρια, καθ' ἅπερ ἂν ὡσι κινήσεις παρὰ φύσιν, ὡς τὰ γε διαθέσεις ἔχοντα παρὰ φύσιν, ἐὰν μὲν κυρίως ὀνομάζῃ, νοσεῖν μᾶλλον ἢ πάσχειν ἐρεῖ, καταχρώμενος δ' οὐ νοσεῖν 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.