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The Early Stoics and Aristotelian Ethics¹

Abstract Aristotle's philosophical legacy should be accepted as one of the historical influences that shaped Stoic moral and psychological thought, even if this influence needs to be demonstrated in each individual case rather than be taken for granted in general. Having discussed the methodological issues raised by the state of our documented evidence, I focus upon the particular philosophical agenda bequeathed by Aristotle, the issue of the structure of the human soul, and the theory of character and emotion. I argue that Aristotle's influence upon the Stoics is not only a matter of their adoption of Aristotelian themes or concepts but that, given the aporetic quality of much of Aristotle's writing, they accepted options as discussed, and actually rejected, by Aristotle. In particular, the Stoics have been influenced by deliberations in which Aristotle discusses, adapts or rejects positions associated with the philosophical hero of the Stoics, Socrates (in particular in *De an.* II, 9–10 and *EN* VII, 1–11). Seen in this light, the Aristotelian legacy appears to be even more relevant to explaining distinctive and in particular Socratic features of Stoic moral psychology than has been previously assumed.

Keywords Stoicism, Aristotle, ethics, Socrates, happiness, virtue, soul, character, emotion, weakness of will

1 Introduction

This paper discusses the relation between Aristotelian and early Stoic ethics: how far can early Stoic moral theory be said to reflect Aristotelian influence? This

¹ This is a slightly reworked and expanded version of a paper I had the pleasure of delivering at the Leiden-Beijing Conference on Aristotelian Virtue Ethics, School of Philosophy and Sociology, Beijing Normal University, May 27–28, 2014.

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question has been addressed before. But I believe there still is room for further research and discussion involving more themes from Stoic ethics and moral psychology.² Here, not only the preserved Aristotelian works themselves should be taken into account, but so should be the relevant evidence concerning Aristotle's school, the Lyceum, which was directed by his successor Theophrastus of Eresus at the time when the Stoa was founded by Zeno of Citium (ca. 300 BC). Since the correct way to use this evidence (that is both Aristotle's own writings and the fragments relating to the early Lyceum) is complicated and controversial, I will start with some methodological points, involving a few considerations on the status quaestionis (§ 2). Given the status quaestionis, I will discuss the agenda of moral philosophy in the early Hellenistic period (§ 3), turn next to the issue of weakness of will in relation to the structure of the soul (§ 4) and to character and emotion (§ 5) before presenting a few conclusions (§ 6). I append a brief section dealing with the ancient reports, according to which Aristotle's esoteric works (as well as Theophrastus' writings) were unavailable in Athens from about 250–90 BC and what this implies for the study of Hellenistic philosophy, including implications for early Stoicism.

2 Methodological Issues; Status Quaestionis

In an article on Aristotle's legacy to Stoic ethics, A. A. Long observes: "No philosophical system is a creation *ex nihilo*, and Stoicism is more derivative than many" (Long 1968, 82). This fact can be illustrated by some passages from the ancient tradition concerned with the lives and careers of the philosophers. Thus, Diogenes Laertius (ca. AD 200) tells us that the founder of Stoicism, Zeno (ca. 334/3–262 BC), having travelled as a young man from his native Citium on the island of Cyprus to Athens, had successively studied with philosophical teachers of various persuasions: Crates the Cynic, Stilpo the Megarian (who specialized in

² For earlier studies see Long (1968), Rist (1969, ch. 1), Inwood (1985, ch. 1), Irwin (1986; 1990); cf. Nielsen (2012) (which is both narrower and broader in scope in that it discusses the influence of one Aristotelian work, the *Nicomachean Ethics* (*EN*), upon all Hellenistic schools of philosophy, involving the question whether there was a treatise corresponding to the text of *EN* as we have it today). The project of studying Aristotelian influence on Stoicism has been rejected in Sandbach (1985), on which see further below in text.

logic), Xenocrates³ and Polemon of the Platonic Academy, and Diodorus Cronus, with whom he studied dialectic (Diog. Laert. VII, 2 and 25 = *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* [hereafter: *SVF*] vol. I, frs. 1 and 5).⁴ But Zeno not only acquainted himself with living philosophers; he is also recorded as having been an avid reader of treatises by, or about, philosophers of the past. One book in which he took an immediate interest was Xenophon's *Memories of Socrates*. Clearly, he was motivated by a strong fascination with the personality and teaching of Socrates. In studying with philosophers of various schools, starting with Crates the Cynic, he was looking for the true descendant, or descendants, of Socrates, or so it is suggested by Diogenes' account (Diog. Laert. VII, 2). This may also go some way towards explaining why the Lyceum under Theophrastus (head of the school from 322/1 to 287/7) is conspicuously absent on the list of teachers and influences of Zeno. Unlike others, the Peripatetics did not style themselves as a Socratic school. In his surviving fragments Theophrastus is silent about Socrates. Other members of the Lyceum were critical of his life, an attitude they shared with the Epicureans (cf. Long 1998, 365–66). Moreover, Theophrastus is silent on Zeno. Even so, as we shall see presently, an overall Socratic orientation on the part of Zeno does not commit us to the position that there was no Aristotelian or Peripatetic influence. "Influence" should be understood to include not just ideas appropriated by the Stoics, but also the stimulus provided by dilemmas formulated by Aristotle, given the general aporetic quality of much of his philosophizing.

The biographical traditions concerned with the lives of the Greek philosophers should be handled with caution when it comes to establishing historical facts. But we need not doubt that Zeno acquainted himself with a broad array of philosophical ideas and lifestyles before establishing himself as an independent teacher of philosophy, choosing as his usual haunt the *Stoa Poikilê* (Painted Colonnade), after which his school was named. The system he developed on the

³ This may be incorrect: Xenocrates directed the Academy from 339/8–314–313 BC. The date of Zeno's birth is uncertain, but a report going back to his associate Persaeus of Citium sets it at 334/3. When Zeno came to Athens as a young man, he may have been just in time to hear Xenocrates lecture in the Academy before Polemo took over. Nonetheless, Diogenes reports that Zeno attended his lectures for no less than 10 years on the authority of Timocrates, a rather shadowy source. Long (1998) considers the association with Xenocrates an anachronism, whereas he stresses (in line with some of our sources) the affiliation with Polemo, whom, he suggests, returned to a more Socratic approach as opposed to the doctrinal form of Platonism promulgated by Xenocrates and his immediate predecessor Speusippus: Long (1998, 366). But even if Zeno did not study under Xenocrates, it is significant that the biographical tradition associates Zeno with the Academy while being silent on the Lyceum.

⁴ The 2nd century CE Platonist author, Numenius, mentions the same teachers except Diodorus while adding the influence of the sayings of the Presocratic Heraclitus (*ap. Eusebius, Praep. evang.* XIV, 5,11 = *SVF* I, 11). Cicero, *Acad. Post.* I, 34 and *De fin.* IV, 3, mentions Polemon in particular and so does Strabo, XIII, 1. 67 (*SVF* I, 10).

basis of various influences he had experienced is a synthesis as clever as it is powerful. It is certainly not eclectic in the sense of being driven by the wish to strike compromises between different positions held by others; it rather creates something new out of them. It is radical in its Socratic confidence in philosophy's power to give us mastery over our lives.⁵ This promise (or, if you like, large claim) to be life-transforming was also typical of another Hellenistic but un-Socratic school, the Garden, founded by Epicurus only a few years before Zeno founded his school. From a more theoretical point of view, it is marked by the ideal of consistency, or coherence: the Stoics were the first to present their philosophy as a system, an organic whole. Including physics and logic, Zeno and his circle must have taken account of non- and post-Socratic developments, as is suggested by the reports about him studying with dialecticians such as Stilpo and the heads of the Platonic Academy, Xenocrates and Polemon. Contemporary historical scholarship has been able to show that elements of the Stoic system can indeed be traced back to these schools and authorities.

Biographical or other sources do not explicitly connect Zeno or his immediate successors or Stoic philosophy with Aristotle or the Lyceum. But for a long time, this fact has not deterred modern scholars from looking at Aristotle's surviving works or the fragments and testimonies deriving from it. For some historians, the Aristotelian rather than the Platonic legacy explained distinctive features of Stoicism. An older example of this tendency is the now discredited theory developed by Von Arnim and Dirlmeier that the Stoic signature concept of *oikeiōsis* ("familiarization") was in fact not Stoic in origin, but had been, in its essentials, developed by Aristotle's immediate successor, Theophrastus.⁶ But a few other, more recent contributions positing Aristotelian influence on Stoic physics and ethics have on the whole held their ground (see the studies by Hahn, Long, or Inwood included in the Bibliography).

This approach to Stoicism came under powerful attack from F.H. Sandbach in 1985. Sandbach rejected the very procedure of considering Stoicism against the Aristotelian backdrop: in no case are we required to refer to what is in the Aristotelian works in order to explain particular features of Stoicism. Lurking behind the appeal to Aristotle, Sandbach submitted, is the preconceived idea that the Stoics could not afford to ignore a philosopher as important as Aristotle. But this is just an extrapolation from Aristotle's later predominance. The situation around 300 BC was quite different from what later developments would lead one

⁵ On this see in particular Long (1993).

⁶ Von Arnim (1926); Dirlmeier (1937). For more recent contributions to the development of theories of other-regarding behaviour in Hellenistic (including Stoic) philosophy see Annas (1990), Schütrumpf (1993) and Algra (2003).

to expect: it was quite possible to disregard Aristotle and his successors. But Sandbach did not credit the ancient tradition according to which Aristotle's and Theophrastus' literary legacy completely disappeared from the philosophical stage and was unavailable between 250–90 BC (most of which time it lay exposed to damp in a trench in a small town of Scepsis in what is today northwest Turkey). He considered it implausible that during this period there were no copies available in Athens or elsewhere which could have informed the Stoics about Aristotle's thought. In fact, the alleged disappearance of those works occurred only after Zeno's headship, when Cleanthes directed the school and Stoic philosophy had already been developed in its main outlines. But this makes the silence of our sources about Aristotelian connection of Stoicism no less significant. This article cannot go into the story of the long eclipse of Aristotle's esoteric works and its possible implications (see the Appendix for more details on this topic).

The ban imposed by Sandbach on using Aristotle's work to explain Stoic philosophy has failed to win general acceptance. Yet his contribution may stand as a salutary reminder of the methodological issues involved. In particular, Sandbach was right to insist that we should not proceed on the assumption that the early Stoics *must* have responded to Aristotelian concepts and arguments.⁷ The burden of proof must lie with those who want to posit such influence—and they must demonstrate this influence from case to case. Moreover, we should not take it for granted that the Stoics used Aristotle's esoteric writings *as we know them today*. Other Peripatetic treatises may have been available to them. No less important, it is necessary to reckon with non-literary influences and interaction. Philosophy was still very much a matter of the spoken word. Contacts between schools and their representatives were facilitated by the fact that they were all headquartered in Athens. The story I recalled at the outset (of Zeno's days as a student in Athens where he could go from one school or teacher to another) still reflects what the situation must have been like. Sandbach's critique was rather focused upon the question of the availability of texts. But in fact, some later anecdotal material actually refers to responses from Zeno and Cleanthes (scholarch 262/1–230/29 BC) to the Lyceum without implying the use of any texts. In the first case, this is obvious: “Zeno, seeing that Theophrastus was admired for having many pupils, said, ‘His chorus is larger, but mine is more harmonious.’ ” (Plutarch, *How One May Be Aware of His Progress in Virtue* 6, 78D = *SVF* I, 280 = Theophr. Fr. 15 FHSG). An anecdote like this should be handled with some caution, but in so far as it refers to Athens as a philosophical

⁷ Concerning the position defended by Sandbach (1985) and what it should imply for the study of the early Stoicism, I find myself in broad agreement with Long (1998, 361–63).

marketplace where schools competed for adherents, there is nothing implausible about it, and there are many more of this kind of stories which support this picture. Zeno and his successors could hardly ignore the Lyceum, which under the direction of Theophrastus was still flourishing.⁸ The second anecdote mentions Zeno's successor Cleanthes as having said that the Peripatetics are like lyres that emit pleasant sounds but are unable to hear themselves (Diog. Laert. VII, 173 = *SVF* I, 606). It is ill-advised to build too much upon this gibe, which may be interpreted in more than one way. But one thing seems clear: Cleanthes took notice of what the Peripatetics said.⁹

This having been said, some Stoic positions and arguments do seem to presuppose acquaintance with specific Aristotelian passages. This has been shown to be the case with respect to particular issues in natural philosophy. Thus the Stoics illustrated their concept of through-and-through blending (*krâsis di'holôn*), according to which two substances of very unequal amount could blend while retaining their original characteristics, by reference to a drop of wine blending with water in the sea. This reverses the position Aristotle mentions in *On Generation and Corruption* I, 10: 328a26–28, where he explicitly denies that a drop of wine can be blended with a very large quantity of water. It still is possible that such an Aristotelian view, together with the example of the wine drop, reached the Stoics by word of mouth rather than through written text. But this probably insoluble question may not be the most important thing as long as the connection itself is indisputable. This is clearly an instance of the Stoics developing their concepts in conscious opposition to Aristotle. Likewise, the early Stoic position that there is an infinite succession of worlds (instead of a single, everlasting one) corresponds to an option considered and rejected by Aristotle in *On the Heavens* I, 10: 279b4–31.¹⁰

⁸ See Long (1998, 361–62), with further references to this discussion (which had been triggered anew by Sandbach 1985).

⁹ One guess would be that it is a gibe aimed at Peripatetic rhetoric as teaching students to speak beautifully, but without paying attention to content. Alternatively, it could mean that the Peripatetics offered good ideas whose import they themselves did not understand, but which the Stoics could, and did, profitably use; cf. Tieleman (2003, 177) (on Cleanthes' versified dialogue between reason and anger, as cited by Galen from Posidonius, *PHP* V, 6.35 = Posid. F 166 EK = *SVF* I, 570).

¹⁰ A similar instance from Plato is the Stoic determination of being as marked by the capacity to act or be acted upon, which reflects Plato, *Sophist* 247d8–c4. Whereas Plato uses this determination as a criterion with which to refute the materialists, the Stoics declare it to be applicable to what is corporeal only. For another Platonic instance see *Rep.* IV: 436b2–4, dealing with soul-partition and presenting the issue as follows: do we learn, feel anger and have appetites with three different soul-parts, or do we each of them “with the whole of our soul whenever we feel the desire (*hormêsômen*).” The second option is rejected by Plato's Socrates in what follows but clearly represents the position taken by the historical Socrates and later adopted by the Stoics. Note the use here of the verb cognate with the Stoic key-concept *hormê*, on which see n.15 with text thereto below.

3 Aristotle's Legacy and the Agenda of Moral Philosophy

Scholars have compared the Stoic and Aristotelian conceptions of happiness (*eudaimonia*), including the issue of the status of the “goods of fortune” in relation to virtue (Long 1968; Irwin 1986; 1990). As is well known, Aristotle, while designating the soul's virtue (*aretê*) as the highest good and hence, the main component of happiness, did not go against the common intuition that happiness requires bodily and external advantages such as health, property and friends, at least to some degree (*EN* I, 9: 1099a31–1099b8). Seen in this light, virtue is not sufficient for happiness, or, put differently, the virtuous person is not self-sufficient but to some extent dependent upon circumstances. The Stoics will not have this: virtue is sufficient for happiness, that is to say a wise person is marked by self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*) (*SVF* III, 49–67).¹¹ The soul is the sole locus of morality to which the terms “good” and “bad” apply. The bodily and external advantages are neither good nor bad; they are “indifferent” (*adiaphora*), even if we are inclined to prefer things that suit our nature such as health and means of living (*SVF* III, 117–168). The Stoics, then, in flouting conventional ideas of happiness and grounding morality directly upon our rational nature are more radical than Aristotle—an attitude for which they looked to Socrates as an example. In so doing, they address a point raised, but not satisfactorily treated, by Aristotle—the relation between virtue and the goods of fortune—and clarify this relation, which involves the introduction of technical distinctions, notably that between good, bad and indifferent. At the same time, their solution is not that far removed from Aristotle. For the Stoics, too, the indifferent items are in a sense indispensable, not as actual components of the highest good but as the material in which virtue expresses itself (*SVF* III, 195; cf. 114, 115). For Aristotle and the Stoics alike, virtue without action is meaningless. Aristotle, moreover, makes it clear that the virtuous activity of our rational soul has special status when it comes to determining the highest good.

It thus seems possible to see Aristotelian and Stoic ethics as variations upon a common agenda, or a limited set of themes: virtue, the other “goods,” happiness as the ultimate goal (*telos*). A comparison brings out the particular choices made by Aristotle and the Stoics with regard to these common themes. Of course, this in itself does not settle the question of historical influence; that is to say whether particular Aristotelian themes and dilemmas actually explain Stoic moral theory. Thus Irwin (1990) undertakes a comparison between the two philosophies without going into the problem of how to establish actual historical influence. But if it is philosophical understanding one is looking for, such a procedure may

¹¹ Note, however, that the linking of the good with notion of self-sufficiency was traditional and accepted by Aristotle, who discusses it somewhat cursorily at *EN* I, 5: 1097b8–21.

be legitimate and useful.

Another theme of early Hellenistic ethics is that of personal development and flourishing, and how this relates to social or other-regarding behaviour. One point of reference here is certainly constituted by what is to be found in Aristotle's theory of *philia* ("friendship"); another, in the Stoic theory of *oikeiôsis* ("familiarization," "appropriation"), which traces the development of human nature from the first impulse toward self-preservation (rather than pleasure, as Epicurus had argued) through increasingly rational and social forms of behavior, a development which ideally ends with the attainment of wisdom-virtue-happiness (*SVF* III, 178–89). This Stoic theory can again be seen as a particular implementation of a eudaimonistic and teleological virtue ethics of the kind offered by Aristotle. But clearly, Aristotle does not refer to nature and natural affinity the way the Stoics do. Nor can we trace the Stoic theory back to Aristotle's successor Theophrastus (see above, p. 107). Rather, we are dealing with various theories building on a few ideas that were "in the air," so to speak (Algra 2003). At subsequent stage, borrowings and interactions took place, as is attested by the account of Peripatetic ethics offered by Arius Didymus (1st century BC), which has been reworked in the light of the Stoic theory of *oikeiôsis*. Here, then, the influence went in the opposite direction, with Stoic ideas being used to bring the older Aristotelian scheme up to date. But at the same time, Arius' account may be taken to show that Peripatetic ethics had remained a point of reference in Hellenistic times as well (Annas 1990).

In the next two sections, I want to put forward a few suggestions concerning Aristotelian "influence" upon a few other themes of Stoic moral theory that have so far attracted far less attention; namely, the structure of the soul and what this implies for the problem of weakness of will (*akrasia*) (§ 4) as well as character and emotion (§ 5).

4 The Soul and the Problem of Akrasia

According to Socratic intellectualism, knowing the good means acting on it: "no one errs wittingly." This entails that acting against one's better judgement is impossible: knowledge is by nature in control; uncontrolled, wrong action is due to ignorance of what is good. Another consequence is that human behaviour, for better or worse, is marked by a unity of motivation. One reasons and acts either well or wrongly; there is no room for ambivalence or inner conflict. This was also how Aristotle understood Socrates (*EN* VII, 3). Plato, however, had dissociated himself from this position of his esteemed teacher. Using Socrates as his mouthpiece, he makes it clear in the fourth book of his *Republic* that acting against one's better judgement is a fact of human life: on a fairly regular basis we

perceive in ourselves and others different forces pulling in opposite directions, and one's reason may not always get the upper hand. To explain the phenomenon of weakness of will or lack of self-restraint (*akrasia*), Plato then introduces his celebrated tripartition of the soul: reason, anger, desire, each of which parts has its own perfection or virtue (*Res. IV*: 436a–444d). Aristotle sided with Plato in so far as he too argued that the phenomenon of *akrasia* presupposes two mental faculties, reason and desire (*EN I*, 13). Aristotle subsumed anger under desire, taking all emotions as forms of desire (with anger as the desire for vengeance), and—at least in the context of moral psychology—arriving at a twofold distinction which agrees with the common intuition that reason and emotion are two different and irreducible factors in our mental life that interact in all kinds of intricate ways. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* he builds his theory of virtue ethics upon this fundamental distinction. In the *On the Soul*, however, he problematizes the partition of the soul. Does the soul have different parts? If so, how many? What is their status: separate in reality, or only distinguishable in thought? Can the unity of the soul be maintained when parts are assumed? What does partition imply for the body-soul relationship? These questions are raised at the outset of the work (*De an.* I, 1: 402b1–5) and crop up a few times in the course of the treatise; but they do not receive separate and full discussion until book III, chs. 9–10, which takes the form of critique of the Platonic tripartition and of its simplification as a rational/non-rational bipartition.¹² Aristotle subjects it to fundamental criticism, which in fact can be held against each and every soul-partition, regardless of exactly how one prefers to carve up the soul. Once one starts partitioning the soul, the number of psychic faculties “in a way seem infinite” (*ibid.* 9: 432a24). In the case of the Platonic tripartition, Aristotle argues that Plato arbitrarily left each of the parts with its own kind of motivation, or desire (*orexis*), when it would have been reasonable to concentrate all forms of motivation into one part involved in action (according to the Platonic scheme, the desiderative part, in spite of its name, has a specific form of desire, namely, that for food, drink and sex; but reason desires knowledge, and anger desires honour and status). Indeed, Aristotle calls splitting up desire (*orexis*) the way Plato does wholly implausible (*ibid.* 9: 432b4). This consideration in fact lies behind Aristotle's own differentiation between reason and desire (*orexis*), two of the five powers he posits in the *On the Soul* (the reason why he operates only with reason and desire in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is that these two functions are relevant to morality, as opposed to, for example, the nutritive power: see *EN I*, 13). In fact, Aristotle raises the question what causes motion (as distinct from what causes judgement, that is, intelligence and sensation combined), distinguishing three

¹² In what follows, I further develop a few suggestions I put forward in Tieleman (2003, 274–276).

alternative options: a part of the soul that is separable either (1) in extension (in the Platonic sense of a part, with separate location and being) or (2) in definition (as a power [*dynamis*] in the Aristotelian sense); (3) the soul as a whole (*ibid.* 9.432a19–21). Aristotle opts for (2). This of course paves the way for the fivefold distinction of powers with which he operates in the *On the Soul* (nutritive, perceptive, desiderative, locomotive, intellectual) while conforming with the twofold distinction suitable also for ethics.

Aristotle does not take option (3) into further consideration, but in fact this option may lie behind some of the points he raises against soul-partition as such. It appears to represent the Socratic position (although Socrates himself may not have theorized about soul-partition in any comparable way).¹³ For Aristotle, then, the Socratic option is to be considered seriously in view of the difficulties confronting *any* division of the soul into faculties, whatever their precise ontological status. It may have remained a point of reference for subsequent generations of philosophers. At any rate, it is the position adopted by the Stoics, who concentrate all the faculties of the Platonic and Aristotelian schemas into their concept of the unitary intellect, or command-centre (*hêgemonikon*) (see Gal. *PHP* III, 1.10–15 = *SVF* II, 885). They are no longer permanent powers or parts, but the intellect in a particular capacity or role. We may illustrate this with the relation between reason and desire, which, as we have just seen, is also the point of interest in two chapters from Aristotle's *On the Soul*, viz. book III, 9–10. Chrysippus is cited as having defined desire (*hormê*) in his work *On Law*¹⁴ as “reason commanding man to act” (Plutarch, *De Stoic. Rep.* 11: 1037F = *SVF* III, 175). This neatly cuts across any faculty approach, whether Platonic- or Aristotelian-style. And we find a similar blending of anger (*thymos*), desire (*epithymia*), and reason (*logismos*) in Cleanthes' versified dialogue between Reason and Anger, which, as I have argued elsewhere, may be intended to drive home the Stoic view that soul-division is deeply problematic and indeed to be rejected (Gal. *PHP* V, 6.35 = *SVF* I, 570).¹⁵

Why did the early Stoics return to the Socratic model of a unitary mind? That it was just the position held by Socrates is probably not enough to explain this. They may have been attracted by its intellectualism, which made humans fully responsible for their actions, including emotional responses (or so it seemed). In turn, this brought them on the radical side, because now emotions had to be

¹³ Cf. also Plato, *Res.* IV: 436b2–4 on which see above, n. 10.

¹⁴ *Hormê*, “desire” or “conation” or (as it is also rendered) “impulse” is the central concept of the Stoic psychology of action (see Inwood 1985, Part 1 and Appendix 2). It is already found in relevant contexts in Aristotle and Plato, however: see Inwood (1985, Appendix 3); cf. also above n. 11. In Stoicism, it is closely related to *orexis* (which we have also translated as “desire”), which is defined as rational *hormê*, that is, that found in humans.

¹⁵ For a full discussion see Tieleman (2003, 264–77), with further references.

eradicated, not just moderated. But since Socrates theoretical problems had been raised. Aristotle's discussion in *On the Soul* III, 9–10 reveals that at least for Aristotle, the rejection of any soul-division was still a serious option in his day, and it is Aristotle himself who in these chapters adduces the arguments that could be used in support of this rejection. It is tempting to assume that the Stoics knew about these arguments, and perhaps these very chapters. The fragments from Chrysippus and Cleanthes I have cited certainly reveal a similar way of thinking about the weak spots of the faculty approach to the soul. Moreover, we have seen other cases where the Stoics actually espouse an option put forward, but rejected, by Aristotle in particular passages from his surviving works (see above, p. 109).

Plato and Aristotle, as we have seen, had come out in favour of soul-division because they felt it was the only way to account for mental conflict, or weakness of the will (*akrasia*). The Stoic preference for the conception of a homogeneously rational mind deprives them of a similar way of explaining this phenomenon, that is to say in terms of two opposing psychic powers or parts. In fact, they have to explain *akrasia* in the sense of a conflict between two forces pulling simultaneously in opposite directions. They fall back on the position that there is no simultaneity here, but what happens is that one abandons an earlier decision. If we think we experience some kind of mental conflict it is a result of wavering, a rapid succession of alternative viewpoints—so rapid that we tend to mistake it for two alternatives that offer themselves to the mind at the same time, or rather divide the mind.¹⁶ Rational thought is conceived of as an inner dialogue, and this is also how the Stoics explain what happens when the intellect wavers: there is an alternation between two voices: that of correct reason, and that of corrupt reason. Cleanthes' dialogue between Reason and Anger (see above, p. 113) may illustrate this.¹⁷

It may be thought that the Stoic rejection of mental conflict in the strict sense was a high price to pay for adopting the unitary model of mind. It seems to bring the Stoics into conflict with what is commonly accepted as a fact of mental life. This, of course, is the intuition famously articulated by Plato in the *Republic* IV. Yet their explanation of *akrasia* as an act of giving up an earlier choice or decision is not implausible in itself, and continues to find defenders in the present-day debate on incontinence. The arguments employed by Aristotle may have encouraged the Stoics to adopt and cling to their position as a philosophically respectable and defensible one (I am referring to *Nicomachean Ethics* VII, chapters 1–11, which offers Aristotle's discussion of the causes of *akrasia*). On the one hand, it seems clear that Aristotle sticks to the model involving reason and desire, and explains loss of control as caused by the action

¹⁶ Plutarch, *On Moral Virtue* 7: 446F (*SVF* III, 459).

¹⁷ For further discussion see Tieleman (2003, 264–77).

of desire; on the other hand, Aristotle problematizes this model, referring once more to Socrates. Socrates had given much weight to the idea that knowledge (if in place) by nature rules, which would make it an astonishing thing, or at least something in need of explanation, that it can be, and relatively often is, overpowered by something else. This is why he concluded that we can only act against what is best out of ignorance (*EN* VII, 2:1145.21–30). Aristotle points out that this brings Socrates at odds with what is patently the case. Even so, the Socratic position leads him to consider more closely the question of what happens to our rational faculty to make it lose control. There are ways in which one may have, but still does not *use*, one's knowledge. In this connection Aristotle refers to physical causes, and distinguishes an impulsive type of akratic (i.e. incontinent person) who does not even deliberate, but goes after his target once it presents itself to him. These ideas, I would suggest, are similar to how the Stoics would later describe lack of self-control (*akrasia*). Aristotle's referencing to illness and bodily factors suited Stoic corporealism. Moreover, Aristotle, even while sticking to his faculty approach, is clearly trying to keep certain aspects of the Socratic model on board—which may exactly be one of the main reasons why the discussion of *akrasia* in *EN* VII, chs. 1–11 is so complicated.¹⁸

5 Character and Emotion

The final suggestion I would like to put forward concerns the related concepts of emotion (or affection, *pathos*) and character (*êthos*). Here, too, we find the Stoics following a technical articulation by Aristotle. In his ethics, Aristotle distinguishes between emotions, powers and dispositions (*EN* II, 5: 1105b19–23). Powers (*dynamēis*) are what the soul *can* (*dynatai*) do: reason, perceive, imagine, desire. Strikingly, Aristotle illustrates what he means by “emotion” (*pathos*) by giving examples: desire, anger, fear, joy, love. The fact that he finds this specification necessary at all may be significant: before him there was no concept of emotion roughly corresponding to our present-day notion among the Greeks.¹⁹ Disposition (or state, *hexis*) in this context is what we call moral character: the inclination to respond in a particular way to a particular type of situation, including of course our emotional responses. It is what makes us different as

¹⁸ For a recent collection of studies on *EN* book VII see Natali (2007). For a collection that covers the subject of *akrasia* in ancient philosophy as a whole see Bobonich and Destrée (2007). For a study focusing on Aristotle's response to Socrates see Burger (2008, esp. 135–53 (on *akrasia*)).

¹⁹ For a similar move in Plato see *Philebus* 47e–48a, listing some emotions to explain what he means by the *pathêmata* (“affections”) of the soul as opposed to those of the body.

individuals, since we are imperfect and weak in different ways: think of the cowardly, or irascible, or lustful person. The perfection of character is what Aristotle takes to be a moral virtue.

We encounter the same schema in early Stoic psychology: emotions (*pathê*) are the temporally limited outbursts arising from an underlying diseased character. They are like the fits of fever suffered by a diseased body.²⁰ Here, the Stoics exploit the meaning of “disease” borne by the Greek *pathos* to the full. They do so because emotion is bad in principle, being an unnatural, excessive and irrational desire (*hormê*), according to Zeno’s definition (Gal. *PHP* IV, 1–2 = *SVF* III, 461, 462). Since an emotional, that is irrational and disturbed, mind is unreceptive to reason and hence, to good counsel, Stoic therapy is predominantly preventive. In other words, it is aimed at improving the underlying character, in particular by instilling correct values and arguments (in addition to measures aimed at the soul’s corporeal nature, the soul being *pneuma*, “spirit” or “breath”). Like Aristotle, they differentiate between individual characters in terms of their propensity or disposition toward certain emotions.²¹

As is well known, the Stoics’ espousal of Socratic intellectualism and their view of emotions as essentially wrong value-judgements led them to advocate the extirpation of all emotion—their ideal of *apatheia* (freedom from emotion), as opposed to Peripatetic *metriopatheia* (moderation of emotion). This constitutes a real difference between them and Aristotle. This issue should not be fudged by suggesting that the Stoics meant only to eradicate vehement emotions.²² But, as we have seen, also Aristotle had taken Socratic intellectualism seriously. In addition to Aristotle’s account of *akrasia* in the first half of *EN* VII, it is worth noting that Aristotle had stressed the cognitive nature of human desire and emotion: its core is an inner awareness or thought. This is not only clear from his account of emotion in *Rhetoric* II, chs. 1–11, but also from the final chapter of the first book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (I, 13), where he draws a distinction between the nutritive or vegetative power on the one hand, and reason and desire on the other. Both reason and desire are “rational,” with the qualification that desire (and hence the emotions) is marked by a receptive kind of rationality being, by nature, obedient to practical reason. But in fact, practical

²⁰ Cf. Gal. *PHP* IV, 2.3, 294.34–36 = *SVF* III, 465; transl. De Lacy: “Chrysippus says that their [scil. the inferior people’s] soul is analogous to a body which is apt to fall into fever or diarrhoea or something else of that kind from a small and chance cause.”

²¹ *SVF* III, 421. Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* IV, 27 (*SVF* III, 423). The technical Stoic term *euempsychia* for this inclination may have been coined by Posidonius of Apamea (c.130–50 BC): see Kidd (1983).

²² As is witnessed for instance by the Roman Stoic Seneca (4 BC–AD 65) who explains the difference between Stoic extirpation and Aristotelian moderation in *Moral Letter* 116, and in his *On Anger* takes issue with the Aristotelian acceptance of anger (for which see *EN* IV, 11) in particular.

reason and desire interact in various, often harmonious ways: thus it is desire which directs reason towards its goals, including the highest good, or happiness—a function which Aristotle ascribes to one particularly reflective kind of desire, a “wish” (*boulêsis*) (*EN* III, 4: 1111b26–30). To be sure, the Stoics replaced the Aristotelian faculty approach to the soul with their “monist” conception, which restored the motivational unity of Socratic intellectualism. But there are, in the light of *On the Soul* III, 9–10 and other passages, also ways of seeing Aristotle as standing somewhere halfway between Plato and the Stoics, and seeing the Stoics as taking steps suggested, but not actually taken, by Aristotle himself.

6 Conclusion

It could hardly be disputed that Aristotelian philosophy helps to explain certain features of Stoicism—whatever may have been the precise line of influence involved. This is not only a matter of Zeno and his successors borrowing Aristotelian concepts or distinctions; it also concerns their use of particular problems and options formulated by Aristotle in aporetic passages from works we still possess. In such cases, it is reasonable to assume that these same texts were available to the early Stoics as well. In particular, we have noted points of contacts between Aristotelian passages (*On the Soul* III, 9–10, *Nicomachean Ethics* VII, 1–11) and Stoic fragments concerning the structure of the soul and the problem of weakness of the will (*akrasia*). In these cases, Aristotle also refers to Socrates as an authority. Socrates was of special significance to the early Stoics who modelled their conception of a radical philosophy of life on the example he had set. Moreover, the Stoics grafted their moral psychology on to Socrates’ moral intellectualism, with its emphasis on motivational unity and on each person’s responsibility for his or her actions. In doing so, the Stoics rejected the Platonic and Aristotelian conception of the human soul as involving separate faculties, most notably reason and emotion. But both Plato and Aristotle had discussed different options, including Socratic ones, in the context of their arguments on these matters. Some Stoic texts we have considered appear to reflect these arguments. In particular, the parallels we found strongly suggest that the Socratic ideas in question may at least in part have reached the Stoics through Aristotle. In this way, too, Aristotle’s legacy contributed to how the Stoics developed their moral psychology. In general, this contribution appears to have been more pervasive than has often been believed.

Appendix: The Disappearance of Aristotle's Esoteric Works in the Hellenistic Period²³

During his lifetime, Aristotle wrote dialogues in a polished style comparable to Plato's, the so-called exoteric works, which were so named because they apparently were intended for a wider audience. But Aristotle is taken to have committed his philosophy primarily to the so-called esoteric works, in which he speaks to the reader directly: the papers and material collections on which he worked and some of which he may have used as the basis of his oral teaching and so were meant for use within his school. Ironically, these are the ones that have survived whereas the published ones have not. But their survival was a stroke of luck, or so want us to believe two related reports in two sources (Strabo, XIII, I, 54 and Plutarch, *Sulla* 26). When Aristotle died in 322 BC he left his literary legacy, that is the esoteric works, to his successor, Theophrastus, who also kept them for use within the school. When Theophrastus died in or around 287, he left Aristotle's works together with his own writings to one of school's members, Neleus of Scepsis, who in turn took them to his native town in the Troad in Asia Minor. After Neleus' death, his relatives, who were no philosophers, kept the precious books but stowed them away, as Strabo tells us, "in a kind of trench" (not a cave, as is sometimes said) for fear of their being confiscated by the king of Pergamum who was in the process of building up a royal library. Damp affected the works badly, but they were finally saved when the bibliophile Apellicon of Teos bought them around 90 BC and took them back to Athens to produce a rather poor edition on the basis of the books. But four years later, the Roman senator and warlord Sulla included the books among his spoils after capturing Athens and took them to Rome. Sometime later, this enabled Andronicus of Rhodes to produce his celebrated edition, the basis of all further editions of, and work on, the Aristotelian text.

Strabo and Plutarch, then, imply that for a considerable period (some 160 years) Aristotle's work was absent from the Athenian philosophical scene, notably during the period in which Athens was the centre of philosophy and the headquarters of the main schools. Of these, the Lyceum fell into decline precisely because, it was sometimes thought, the Peripatetics could no longer read Aristotle's works. This decline of his school was perceived by historians to have occurred gradually during the greater part of the Hellenistic period (from the beginning of Strato of Lampasacus' headship, mid-third century BC) onwards, and is taken to have involved a loss of philosophical influence (for lack of

²³ This summary of the debate on the fate of Aristotle's esoteric works is mainly based on Lynch (1972), Moraux (1973) and Natali (2013).

leading philosophers) as well as adherents.²⁴ Moreover, and more relevant to our purposes, the disappearance of Aristotle's works from Athens during this period has been used to help explain the comparative reticence of our sources concerning Stoic responses to Aristotle's work—a silence which we signaled at the outset of this paper.

Today, however, the story itself is, on the whole, read more critically. As we have noticed (above, p. 107), even a fierce critic of the assumption of Aristotelian influences upon Stoicism such as Sandbach declines to take it seriously. We are told of the same collection of copies being sold to king Ptolemy Philadelphus and then finding their way into the library of Alexandria (Athenaeus, *Deipn.* I: 3a-b, p.12 Olson). In fact, the story transmitted by Plutarch and Strabo, while coherent, may have been inspired by the competition between libraries for the best editions. We already noted the reference to the Pergamenian library. This seems to have led to the assumption that there were actually no other copies apart from Aristotle's (and Theophrastus') literary legacy. But this is implausible, and in fact highly dubitable in the light of surviving reports of Peripatetics and others possessing copies of Aristotelian works. These reports show that Aristotle's and Theophrastus' works had not disappeared, or at least not nearly as completely as is suggested by the tradition reflected by Strabo and Plutarch.²⁵ The decline of Aristotle's school in the second half of the third and the second centuries BC had other reasons. The new schools, Epicurus' Garden and Zeno's Stoa, exerted a powerful appeal with their promise of a road toward happiness. Of the Hellenistic schools, the Lyceum seemed most devoted to theoretical studies, to the contemplative life; it was less concerned with peddling a life-transforming philosophy than its competitors were. As for the relations between Stoicism and Aristotle's legacy, the story about the long disappearance of the esoteric works should no longer keep us from studying them to answer the question of the historical connections between Aristotle and Stoicism.

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²⁴ This decline is documented and discussed in Lynch (1972, 135–62).

²⁵ In Theophrastus' time, the Peripatetic Eudemus returned to his native Rhodes carrying a copy of Aristotle's *Physics*; later he wrote a letter to Theophrastus to check some readings in the school text (fr. 6 Wehrli); cf. Lynch 1972, 148–49. In Rhodes he had copies of parts of the *Metaphysics* and, most likely, a copy of the work later named after him, the *Eudemian Ethics*, and possibly the *Analytics* as well (see Wehrli fr. 3). Philodemus quotes from a letter from Epicurus (340–270 BC) asking a friend to send him "Aristotle's *Analytics* and *On Nature*" (P. Herc. 1005, fr. 111), which shows that the distribution of copies was not confined to Peripatetic circles; cf. Natali (2013, 102).

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