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HOW THE STOICS BECAME ATHEISTS*

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ABSTRACT. *In the middle of the seventeenth century, scholarship on ancient Stoicism generally understood it to be a form of theism. By the middle of the eighteenth century, Stoicism was widely (though not universally) reckoned a variety of atheism, both by its critics and by those more favourably disposed to its claims. This article describes this transition, the catalyst for which was the controversy surrounding Spinoza's philosophy, and which was shaped above all by contemporary transformations in the historiography of philosophy. Particular attention is paid to the roles in this story played by Thomas Gataker, Ralph Cudworth, J. F. Buddeus, Jean Barbeyrac, and J. L. Mosheim, whose contributions collectively helped to shape the way in which Stoicism was presented in two of the leading reference works of the Enlightenment, J. J. Brucker's* Critical History of Philosophy *and the* Encyclopédie *of Diderot and d'Alembert.*

I

The neo-Stoicisms of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were explicitly intended as supplements to mainstream varieties of Christianity. Although the leading neo-Stoic writer Justus Lipsius (1547–1606) was notorious for his switches of confessional allegiance over the course of his life, from Catholicism to Lutheranism to Calvinism and back to Catholicism again, he remained consistent with his argument, presented most straightforwardly in his 1584 dialogue *De constantia*, that Stoicism – both its ethics and its physics – provided an appropriate philosophical framework for a well-lived Christian life.[1] His contemporaries agreed, with Thomas James, fellow of New College, Oxford, and later Bodley's Librarian, writing in 1598, 'Let it not seem strange unto us that Philosophie should be a meanes to help Divinitie, or that Christians may profit by the Stoicks.'[2]

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[1] Justus Lipsius, *Two bookes of constancie* (New Brunswick, 1939).

[2] From the Epistle Dedicatory of Guillaume du Vair, *The moral philosophie of the Stoicks*, trans. Thomas James (London, 1598). For more on Lipsius's relations with the churches, see especially Mark Morford, *Stoics and neostoics: Rubens and the circle of Lipsius* (Princeton, 1991), ch. 4, 'Lipsius, the church and posterity'.

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Given that the Stoics taught, among many other things, the materiality of God, indeed, the identification of God with nature, a strict physical determinism, and a doctrine of eternal recurrence, it might seem surprising that the neo-Stoics were able to redeploy Stoic arguments in the service of the Christianities they professed. But there were ways in which this could be done. Lipsius, for example, possessed an effective monopoly over the interpretation of Stoic physics, owing to his authorship of the standard textbook on the subject, the *Physiologiae stoicorum*, published in 1604. This book did present a series of arguments that were recognizably Stoic, and provided a series of references to relevant Greek and Latin texts which had not previously been analysed or edited in any systematic way, but it also managed to falsify the arguments of the Stoics to a considerable extent. Lipsius denied, for example, that the Stoics taught a pantheistic materialism when he claimed that they had argued that 'God is contained in things but not infused with them.'[3] An alternative and more common approach was to avoid the matter of Stoic physics altogether. Guillaume du Vair (1556–1621), whose preferred Stoic text was the *Encheiridion* or *Manual* of Epictetus, found himself in his *Moral philosophie of the Stoicks* able to exalt the piety and the monotheism of the Stoics, presenting the God of the Stoics as identical with the God of the Christians, for the maxims of this short compilation stuck to moral exhortation, and avoided the reefs of theological controversy.

Problems, therefore, were bound to arise for these syncretist understandings of Stoicism when the conditions which made these neo-Stoic interpretations plausible no longer obtained – and the neo-Stoics themselves inadvertently contributed to the undermining of their own arguments. On the one hand, Lipsius encouraged scholarly attention to the physics of the Stoics through his publication of the *Physiologiae stoicorum*, and yet a more assiduous investigation of the sources for those physics would generally undermine his argument about the symbiotic relationship that could obtain between Stoicism and Christianity. On the other hand, du Vair did much to popularize the philosophy of Epictetus in early seventeenth-century France, but a broader understanding of the systematic nature of Epicteatan Stoicism and, in particular, sustained attention to the arguments of his longer *Diatribai* (or *Discourses*) rather than the shorter *Encheiridion* would subvert his claims about the compatibility of this Stoicism with conventional religion. In the long run, neo-Stoic syncretism was unsustainable. But even in the middle of the seventeenth century, the best scholarship on the Stoics could still be placed in the service of Christian Stoicism, as Thomas Gataker's edition of Marcus Aurelius demonstrates.

[3] Justus Lipsius, *Physiologiae Stoicorvm libri tres* (Antwerp, 1604), 1.8. For a detailed summary of Lipsius's errors in both the *Physiologiae* and *De constantia*, see A. A. Long, 'Stoicism in the philosophical tradition', in Brad Inwood, ed., *The Cambridge companion to the Stoics* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 379–82. For a useful discussion of how Lipsius selectively uses Stoic arguments in *De constantia*, see Jan Papy, 'Lipsius' (neo-)Stoicism: constancy between Christian faith and Stoic virtue', in Hans W. Blom and Laurens C. Winkel, eds., *Grotius and the Stoa* (Assen, 2004), pp. 52–6.

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Thomas Gataker (1574–1654) published in 1652 a Greek–Latin edition of Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*, a work which has been called 'the single major scholarly achievement of the [Cambridge University] press' during the period of the Civil War and interregnum.[4] Gataker's extensive notes covered a far wider range of sources in technical Stoic philosophy than Lipsius had examined in his Stoic textbooks, and – most significantly for the purposes of this article – his edition was introduced with a preface, or *Praeloquio*, generally known in either of its English translations as the 'Preliminary discourse', which was by far the most authoritative treatment of Stoicism in English for at least a century after its publication, and was widely recognized as such.[5] Despite Gataker's sophisticated understanding of Stoic physics and a much deeper interest in Epictetus than that possessed by the neo-Stoics of the previous century, he remained anxious to present his Stoics as fairly conventional theists, and certainly as thinkers in whom contemporary Christians could find inspiration, expounding their core theological position in these ringing terms in the 'Preliminary discourse':

> God Almighty governs the Universe; that his Providence is not only General, but Particular, and reaches to Persons and Things. That he presides over Humane Affairs; that he assists Men not only in the greatest Concerns, in the Exercise of Virtue, but also supplies them with the Conveniences of Life. And therefore that God ought to be Worshipp'd above all Things, and applied to upon all Occasions; that we should have him always in our Thoughts, acknowledge his Power, resign to his Wisdom and adore his Goodness for all the satisfactions of our being. To submit to his Providence without Reserve. To be pleased with his Administration; and fully persuaded that the Scheme of the World could not have been mended, nor the Subordination of Things more suitably adjusted, nor all Event have been better timed for the common advantage; and therefore that 'tis the duty of all Mankind, to obey the Signal and follow the Intimations of Heaven, with all the Alacrity imaginable: that the Post assign'd us by Providence must be maintained with Resolution; and that we ought to die a thousand times over, rather than desert it.[6]

As had been the case for du Vair with respect to Epictetus, Gataker's interest in Marcus Aurelius was chiefly as a source of moral inspiration, which he argued was almost entirely compatible with Christian ethics. He remarked that, 'I think it may be boldly asserted, there are no remaining monuments of the ancient strangers, which none nearer to the doctrine of CHRIST, than the writings and admonitions of these two; Epictetus and [Marcus Aurelius] Antoninus',[7] and

[4] Jill Kraye reports this verdict from the history of the Press in her article, '"Ethnicorum omnium sanctissimus": Marcus Aurelius and his *Meditations* from Xylander to Diderot', in Jill Kraye and M. W. F. Stone, eds., *Humanism and modern philosophy* (London, 2000), p. 114.

[5] Different portions of the Preliminary Discourse were translated and appended to Jeremy Collier's 1701 edition of Marcus Aurelius, as well as to Francis Hutcheson's 1742 translation; and in August 1730 the text of the Discourse formed the basis of an advertisement for a new edition of Epictetus (never published) that was placed in *The present state of the republic of letters*, a London journal.

[6] Gataker, quoted in Jeremy Collier, trans., *The emperor Marcus Aurelius his conversation with himself* (3rd corrected edn, London, 1726), sig. b4–b4^{v}.

[7] Gataker, in Marcus Aurelius, *The meditations*, trans. Francis Hutcheson and James Moor (Glasgow, 1742), pp. 470–3.

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even made the striking claim that we could read these Roman Stoics as examples of applied Christian morality, for what was 'summarily proposed' in the New Testament was 'more extensively applied' and 'more fully explained' in these Stoic works.[8]

It is not in Gataker's pages, however, but in those of his contemporary, the Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth (1617–88), who was writing on the physics rather than the ethics of the Stoics, that we begin to see how the concerns about Stoic theology were to be articulated. The discussion of Stoicism in the second volume of his massive 1678 *True intellectual system of the universe* represents, I believe, the most sustained discussion in the seventeenth-century English tradition of the question as to whether the Stoics' physics should permit their philosophy to be interpreted as a form of theism. Cudworth ultimately followed Gataker, Lipsius, and du Vair in arguing that the Stoics were theists: theirs was presented as a teaching of '*divine* fate, morall and naturall' according to the book's central classificatory scheme. They might have been, in Cudworth's fine phrase, 'sottish corporealists'[9], but they were not themselves atheists; though, as he remarked casually in the third volume, they were 'imperfect, mongrel and spurious theists'.[10] In Cudworth's account, the decisive issue was that of Creation:

> [A]s to that controversy so much agitated amongst the ancients, whether the world were made by chance, or by the necessity of material motions, or by mind, reason and understanding; they [=the Stoics] avowedly maintained that it was neither by chance nor by material necessity, but *divina mente*, 'by a divine and eternal mind' every way perfect.[11]

Furthermore, Cudworth had some praise for the way in which Cicero set out the Stoics' arguments for the existence of God under three headings in his *De natura deorum*, using an argument from design, an argument from 'universal harmony', and an argument from the 'scale of nature', a set of reasons which, he said, were not 'at all contemptible, or much inferior to those which have been used in these latter days'.[12] While he acknowledged and copiously documented evidence of the Stoics' polytheism, he concluded these passages of exposition with a stress on Epictetus' and Cleanthes' invocations of a single deity, 'because many are so extremely unwilling to believe that the Pagans ever made any religious address to the supreme God as such', and he reprinted the famous hymn of Cleanthes both

[8] Ibid., p. 476.

[9] Ralph Cudworth, *The true intellectual system of the universe* (3 vols., London, 1845), II, p. 97 (hereafter, *TIS*).

[10] Ibid., III, p. 83.

[11] Ibid., I, p. 98.

[12] Ibid., I, p. 98. Leibniz, in his notes on *TIS*, registered his triple agreement with Cudworth, Cicero, and the Stoics and his disagreement with the Epicureans (and Hobbes) with respect to a part of the argument for the existence of God, writing, 'Atheistarum prava opinio apud Cicer. *de nat. d.* I.213: Nulla naturalis charitas, omnis benevolentia oritur ex imbecillitate … Ita recentior (+Hobbes+) jus Deo esse a sola potentia irresitibili.' (Leibniz's reference system is different to the one generally used today: the reference is to Cicero, *De natura deorum*, I.121–2.) G. W. Leibniz, *Textes inédits*, ed. Gaston Grua (2 vols., Paris, 1948), I, p. 328.

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in the original Greek and in a Latin translation by 'my learned friend Dr. Duport'.[13]

II

In his classic study of Cudworth, J. A. Passmore suggested that the lengthy critique of 'hylozoistic atheism' in *The true intellectual system* was aimed at refuting the philosophy of Benedict Spinoza (1632–77), which generated so much controversy in the 1670s and subsequent decades. Hylozoistic atheism was a doctrine, Cudworth noted, which began with Strato, then 'slept in perfect silence and oblivion', but which has 'of late [been] awakened and revived by some'. Spinoza's work, Passmore judged, Cudworth 'knew only imperfectly but interpreted as reviving a tradition which was worth opposing in detail'.[14] But Cudworth treated hylozoistic atheism and divine fate (moral and natural) in separate sections of his project, and thereby kept his attack on Spinozism, if that is what it was, set apart from his treatment of the Stoics. Other writers would work instead to run these two philosophical systems together, and to treat them as the subject of a common critique.

Susan James has set out in some detail the reasons as to why we should take seriously the idea of 'Spinoza the Stoic'.[15] She emphasizes Spinoza's defence of a series of controversial positions identifiable as Stoic, including, among others, the identification of God with Nature (in the famous phrase, *Deus sive natura*), the equation of the passions with false judgements, and that of virtue with happiness. She also draws attention to what is a considerably less obvious aspect of his thinking, however, when she argues that 'Spinoza displays an awareness of the objections to which the Stoic account of virtue was habitually subjected, and that in responding to them he draws still further on the resources of Stoic philosophy.'[16] This opinion, that Spinoza was in important respects a sophisticated kind of modern Stoic was not one confined to twentieth-century scholars. During the Spinozist controversy itself, both Pierre Bayle and J. F. Buddeus, as we shall see, found the Stoic label an appropriate one to use when considering the content and structure of Spinoza's arguments, and Giambattista Vico was clear that there were continuities, referring at one point in his *Scienza nuova* to the Stoics, 'in this

[13] *TIS*, I, pp. 117–19.

[14] J. A. Passmore, *Ralph Cudworth: an interpretation* (Cambridge, 1951), pp. 5–6, quoting from the Preface to *TIS*.

[15] Susan James, 'Spinoza the Stoic', in Tom Sorrell, ed., *The rise of modern philosophy* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 289–316. Long makes a similar case in his survey of the legacy of Stoicism: Long, 'Stoicism in the philosophical tradition', pp. 369–79. See also Alexandre Matheron's contribution to Pierre-François Moreau and Jacqueline Lagrée, eds., *Le stoïcisme aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles: actes du colloque CERPHI* (Caen, 1994).

[16] James, 'Spinoza the Stoic', p. 292. In particular, James demonstrates, pp. 310–16, the manner in which Spinoza rebutted the contemporary objections to the Stoic insistence that virtue was incompatible with passion by restating a Stoic account of rational action, which insisted that it is the rational person who acts, whereas the passionate person is merely acted upon by external things.

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respect the Spinozists of their day'.[17] The controversy surrounding Spinoza's philosophy, therefore, gave those who might have been unsure as to just how to categorize the Stoics an incentive to adjust the criteria as to what was to count as theism, until they could be presented as not just atheists but as *Spinozist* atheists. In particular, the matter of divine punishment and reward after death – which Spinoza denied – became increasingly central to discussions and definitions of atheism.[18]

Although Spinoza's most detailed arguments about the nature of God were elaborated in the First Part of his *Ethics*, first published as a part of the *Opera postuma* in 1677, the notorious argument against the possibility of miracles in chapter 6 of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, which ignited the controversy in 1670, deployed an account of the nature of things which touched on Stoic cosmology in significant ways. Spinoza's argument against the possibility of miracles was premised, in the first instance, on the identification of the laws of nature with the decrees of God. More particularly, however, the violence which Spinoza's account of God in the *Tractatus* performed on traditional Christian notions of Providence conjured up all of the anxieties and objections which had been expressed against Lipsius' arguments about Stoic fate and divine Providence in *De constantia*. For Spinoza to assert that 'God's decree, command, edict and word are nothing other than the action and order of Nature' was to proclaim the truth about Stoic determinism that Lipsius had endeavoured to deny, or, at least, to shuffle under the carpet.[19]

Jakob Thomasius (1622–84), the father of the more eminent philosopher Christian and the tutor of Leibniz, was the first scholar to publish an attempted refutation of the argument of the *Tractatus*: Spinoza's book was first published in Amsterdam in January 1670 (though the title page said Hamburg), and Thomasius had his own *Adversus anonymum, de libertate philsophandi* published in Leipzig in May of the same year.[20] The same Thomasius would also appear to be the first author to worry at length in print about the Stoics' physics specifically in terms of the atheist implications of their materialist cosmology. In 1676, he published a neo-Aristotelian attack on Lipsius's syncretist ambition to reconcile Christian theology and Stoic physics, *Exercitatio de stoica mundi exustione*, in which he claimed that 'Nothing has more disgracefully corrupted the history of philosophy than the attempt to reconcile the Christian faith, now with Plato, now with Aristotle, now with the Stoics or other pagan groups.'[21] Thomasius's attack on

[17] Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch, trans., *The new science of Giambattista Vico* (Ithaca, 1984), §335.

[18] E.g., Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: philosophy and the making of modernity: 1650–1750* (Oxford, 2001), p. 9.

[19] Spinoza, *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, p. 132 in the 1925 Gebherdt edn, e.g., in the Brill reissue, trans. Samuel Shirley, ed. Brad S. Gregory (Leiden, 1989), cited in Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, p. 221.

[20] Ibid., pp. 281–2. See also p. 32 for the claim that Thomasius and Leibniz were aware much earlier than most of the identity of the book's author. Also Margaret C. Jacob, *The radical Enlightenment* (London, 1981), p. 53.

[21] Jacob Thomasius, *Exercitatio de stoica mundi exustione* (Leipzig, 1676), quoted in Giovanni Santinello, ed., *Models of the history of philosophy* (Dordrecht, 1993), p. 416.

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Lipsius was organized on three main fronts: first, he criticized Lipsius's interpretation of the inseparability of the two principles (active and passive) which the Stoics had argued structured the universe; second, he identified and criticized the Stoics' conflation of God and the world, the key claim of their pantheism, and one which Lipsius had specifically endeavoured to deny; third, he insisted that Lipsius's attempt to deny that God was responsible for evil, given his Stoic premises, had to fail.[22]

If Thomasius forged the path, Pierre Bayle (1647–1706) followed in his footsteps.[23] In his 1697 *Dictionary* entry on 'Spinoza', he observed that the Stoic doctrine of 'the soul of the world' was the same as the argument that Spinoza had made, and in the article on 'Jupiter', he described the pantheism of the Stoics as 'a real Atheism'.[24] But if Bayle was the first major writer to brand the Stoics as atheists on account of their pantheism, the writer who devoted the most time and attention to an investigation, elaboration, and denunciation of this axis of Stoic/Spinozist/atheist evil was Johann Franz Buddeus (1667–1729), professor at Halle and Jena, who devoted a series of studies over the length of his career to different aspects of the matter. The first was a short work on the errors of the Stoics,[25] which was followed by a work on 'Spinozism before Spinoza',[26] a widely read treatise on *Atheism and superstition*,[27] a scholarly edition of Marcus Aurelius with a detailed introductory essay,[28] and his important works on the history of philosophy,[29] which is the focus of interest in what follows.

In the middle of the seventeenth century, the standard approach to the historiography of philosophy – which at this time almost universally meant writing the history of ancient philosophy – was still closely modelled on Diogenes Laertius's book on the *Lives and opinions of the Greek philosophers* from antiquity. A typical work would be organized by sect, each section being subdivided by author, with a doxography of the sect's distinctive arguments presented in the

[22] For more extended discussion of Thomasius's argument, see Jacqueline Lagrée, in Christian Mouchel, ed., *Juste Lipse (1547–1606) en son temps: actes du colloque de Strasbourg, 1994* (Paris, 1996), pp. 43–4.

[23] For discussion of Bayle's critique of the Stoics, see Jacqueline Lagrée, 'La critique du stoïcisme dans le *Dictionnaire* de Bayle', in Michelle Magdelaine et al., eds., *De l'humanisme aux Lumières, Bayle et le Protestantisme: mélanges en l'honneur d'Elisabeth Labrousse* (Oxford, 1996), esp. pp. 583, 588–90; Giovanni Bonacina, *Filosofia ellenistica e cultura moderna: epicureismo, stoicismo e scetticismo da Bayle a Hegel* (Florence, 1996), pp. 26–32; Christopher Brooke, 'Stoicism and anti-Stoicism in the seventeenth century,' in Blom and Winkel, eds., *Grotius and the Stoa*, pp. 104–13.

[24] 'Spinoza', Note A; 'Jupiter', Note N; in Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (any edition).

[25] J. F. Buddeus, *De erroribus Stoicorum in philosophia morali* (Halle, 1695). This book is also discussed in Alan C. Kors, *Atheism in France, 1650–1729*, I: *The orthodox sources of disbelief* (Princeton, 1990), p. 231.

[26] J. F. Buddeus, *De Spinozismo ante Spinozam* (Halle, 1701).

[27] Idem, *Theses theologicae de atheismo et superstitione* (Jena, 1717), more widely read in its French translation, *Traité de l'athéisme et de la superstition*, trans. Louis Philon (Amsterdam, 1740). For more on this book and its content, see Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, pp. 634–5; Kors, *Atheism in France*, p. 232.

[28] J. F. Buddeus, *Introductionem ad philosophiam stoicam ex mente M. Antonini* (Leipzig, 1729).

[29] Idem, *Analecta historiae philosophicae* (Halle, 1706), and the posthumous J. F. Buddeus and Johann Georg Walch, *Compendium historiae philosophicae, observationibus illustratum* (Halle, 1731).

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section devoted to its founder, in the case of the Stoics, Zeno of Citium.[30] Passages on later philosophers adhering to the particular school would follow the treatment of the founder, in broadly chronological order. While mention would be made of particular specialisms or idiosyncracies which appeared in the work of these later adherents, however, there would not be any detailed treatment of what scholars would today recognize as the basic stuff of the history of philosophy, the presentation of how the course of philosophical argument over time led to modifications in the doctrines maintained by the philosophers and the schools. To take one example, early modern authors attributed the Stoic Chrysippus' modifications of Zeno's doctrine either to his failure to understand his master's teaching or else to personal vice, but never to his attempt to work out the logic of Zeno's ideas as he set about fashioning a comprehensive Stoic philosophical system.[31] Those who wrote on the history of philosophy could discuss whether theses were true or false, in light of the best philosophical accounts of their own age, or of revealed religion, but they had no account of how progress in philosophy might be made, of how within a certain tradition of philosophical argument, arguments might be found wanting and replaced, where possible, with better ones.

The leading English work in this vein was the compendious *History of philosophy* by Thomas Stanley (1625–78), first published in 1655.[32] Following this template, Stanley treated the Stoics in isolation from other philosophical schools and presented a life of Zeno together with a comprehensive doxography of Stoic doctrine, much of it taken straight out of Diogenes Laertius. He had little to say with any specificity about Stoics after Zeno, and nothing at all about the Stoics of the Roman period.[33] When it came to the theism of the Stoics, which he discussed in Part Eight, chapter XVII, he noted that the historical record reported a variety of opinions about the Stoics' God,[34] with the problem about treating the Stoics as simple monotheists being clearly in view, given the way in which Stanley tacked back and forth between references to the 'God' and the 'Gods' of the Stoics in his reports of the teachings found in the various ancient authorities (in this section, Plutarch, Diogenes Laertius, and Cicero). The closest he came to resolving this

[30] For detailed descriptions of the contents of many such works, see especially Santinello, ed., *Models of the history of philosophy*, and idem, ed., *Storia della storie generali della filosofia*, II: *Dall'età cartesiana a Brucker* (Brescia, 1979), passim.

[31] For further discussion of this point, especially on the subject of vice, see Brooke, 'Stoicism and anti-Stoicism', pp. 106–7.

[32] Thomas Stanley, *The history of philosophy* (London, 1655–62).

[33] There are two pages on Cleanthes (ibid., pp. 481–3), five pages on Chrysippus (pp. 483–7, largely given over to the lengthy catalogue of his works), and fewer than two pages in total on Zeno of Tarsus, Diogenes of Seleucia, Antipater of Sidon, Panaetius, and Posidonius, the other Stoics treated in his Part Eight. For some remarks on Stanley's treatment of different periods of ancient philosophy, see Santinello, ed., *Models of the history of philosophy*, pp. 200–1.

[34] E.g., 'The substance of God, Zeno affirms to be the whole World and Heaven; so also Chrysippus in the 11th of the Gods, and Posidonius in the first of the Gods. But Antipater in his Seventh of the World, affirms his substance to be aerial. Boethius in his Book of Nature, saith, the substance of God is the Sphere of fixed Stars. Sometimes they call him a nature containing the World, sometimes a nature producing all upon Earth.' Stanley, *The history of philosophy*, p. 478.

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tension was when he suggested that 'God is a Spirit, diffused through the whole World, having several denominations, according to the several parts of the matter through which he spreadeth, and the several effects of his power shewn therein', before rattling off a variety of these names (Dia, Minerva, Nepture, etc.).[35]

In the latter part of the seventeenth century, however, a revolution in the historiography of philosophy pioneered by Samuel Pufendorf (1632–94) and Christian Thomasius (1655–1728) and associated with a new understanding of 'eclecticism' in philosophy paved the way both for a coherent notion of philosophical progress and for the large, multivolume histories of philosophy written in the eighteenth century.[36] Instead of providing accounts of the teachings of the different schools or sects in isolation from one another, the historiography of philosophy would be, as we might say, problem-driven, examining particular philosophical questions, the arguments to which these had historically given rise, and, crucially, those moments at which the participants in those arguments appeared to agree that the state of the question had changed, or that the argument had moved on. In considering the topics that were debated between the partisans of the different schools, furthermore, the new historians of philosophy had the highest praise for those they considered to be 'eclectic' philosophers, those who were not beholden to the dogmas of a particular school, but who enjoyed the freedom to draw as they saw fit from among the various authorities and arguments that were available to them. But there was also another development in the technique of writing the history of philosophy, pioneered in the early eighteenth century and associated in particular with Buddeus, which has been less remarked upon in the recent literature on the historiography of philosophy in this period. Rather than examining each of the ancient philosophical schools by listing their opinions on various topics, Buddeus sought to identify the nuclear or constitutive principles of those philosophical schools, the key teachings from which other doctrines were considered to flow. This was then a way of distinguishing the core from the peripheral arguments of the various schools, which could help scholars cope with the fact – quite an obvious fact in the case of the Stoics – that a number of the source materials for the study of the Hellenistic schools made contradictory claims.

Given Buddeus's triple preoccupation with atheism, Stoicism and Spinoza, it is perhaps not surprising that his methodological innovation in the historiography of philosophy had a specific application to precisely this polemic. Indeed, this

[35] Ibid., p. 478. See also Santinello, ed., *Models of the history of philosophy*, pp. 200–1.

[36] For an outline of these developments in the historiography of philosophy, see Richard Tuck, 'The "modern" theory of natural law', in Anthony Pagden, ed., *The languages of political theory in early-modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 102–7, and for more detailed discussion see T. J. Hochstrasser, *Natural law theories in the early Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 2000), passim, esp. pp. 150–9 on Buddeus. Also J. J. Brucker, *Historia critica philosophiae* (Leipzig, 1742–4). There are brief remarks from Pierluigi Donini in his article on 'The history of the concept of eclecticism' in A. A. Long and John M. Dillon, eds., *The question of 'eclecticism'* (Berkeley, 1988), pp. 15–33. See also the article, 'Eclectisme', by Diderot in the *Encyclopédie*.

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distinctive method seems to have been developed out of Buddeus's extensive reflections on Stoicism, after his observation that the moral precepts of Seneca and Marcus Aurelius, which appeared attractive and assimilable to Christian truth, were in fact generated by deeper arguments deeply antithetical to religious orthodoxy, indeed, were generated by arguments familiar to the contemporary world above all through the philosophy of Spinoza.[37] According to Buddeus's presentation, the single most important dogma of the Stoics was their identification of God with the world, and the various other principles that they maintained were held ultimately to follow from this.[38] In the realm of Stoic moral philosophy, the contradiction between the admirable individual maxims of the Stoics and the impious premises by which they were generated found its expression in the hypocrisy of individual Stoic philosophers, a subject in which Buddeus was quite interested.[39]

In the work on atheism, Buddeus distinguished between two varieties of atheists:

> In the first category, I put those who shamelessly and straightforwardly deny the existence of God, or those who – owing to their bad faith – can only deny or ignore the atheism which necessarily flows from their principles.
>
> In the second category, I put those who set up principles from which one can validly infer conclusions which are either prejudicial or injurious to the Providence and the liberty of God.[40]

Buddeus assigned the Epicureans to the first category, and the Stoics and Aristotle to the second, but he then distinguished between the latter two, in order to make an argument as to why the former are closer to Spinoza than the latter:

> While Aristotle remained content to assert that God was always present in the world, the Stoics maintained that he was immanent in the world itself, as was clearly demonstrated by JAC THOMAS *de Exustione Mundi Stoica Dissert.* 15. Their system, therefore, is closer to that of Spinoza than is Aristotle's.[41]

Early in this study, Buddeus noted that many readers have found in the Stoics 'their fine sentences concerning religion, virtue, etc.', and he commented, characteristically, 'But these only serve to show that one can infer valid conclusions from false principles, or that the Stoics at least did not always reason logically.'[42] A little later he observed that he did not intend to say anything specific about Epictetus or Marcus Aurelius, but noted that while no one objected to *their* atheism, their cases were covered by his earlier more general treatment of the Stoics, so that they could clearly be treated as such.[43]

[37] Santinello, ed., *Dall'età cartesiana a Brucker*. [38] Ibid., p. 393, quoting pp. 253–4.
[39] Santinello, ed., *Dall'età cartesiana a Brucker*, referring to Buddeus and Walch, *Compendium historiae philosophiae*, p. 265. [40] Buddeus, *Traité de l'athéisme*, Preface (my own translation).
[41] Ibid., p. 28 n2. [42] Ibid., p. 28 n1. [43] Ibid., p. 44 n1.

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III

Buddeus is relatively obscure today. If he is remembered at all, it is for his attacks on Christian Wolff in the 'War of the Philosophers' from 1723.[44] He remains an important figure, however, for understanding the academic presentation of Stoicism in the early eighteenth century. In particular, there are three sites at which we can discern the impact of his arguments about the Stoics for eighteenth-century authors, and this survey will end with a brief examination of each of these. In the first place, there was an attempt to sidestep the implications of Buddeus's arguments about Stoicism, exemplified above all by Jean Barbeyrac in his 'Historical and critical account of the science of morality'. Secondly, Buddeus's own followers continued to make recognizable versions of his arguments about the Stoics, and in this context I examine J. L. Mosheim's commentary on Cudworth. Third, the Buddean argument could also be redeployed in the service of quite un-Buddean goals, and this, I suggest, is what happened when Diderot appropriated J. F. Brucker's presentation of the Stoics when assembling the article on 'Stoicism' for the *Encyclopédie*.

Buddeus sidestepped. Although Buddeus developed his arguments about the proper methods for understanding ancient philosophers over his entire academic career – he died in 1729 and his final work, the *Compendium historiae philosophiae observationibus illustratum* was edited and published by his son-in-law in Halle in 1731 – his core argument that equated the philosophical systems of Spinoza and the Stoics was available from 1701, with his treatise on 'Spinozism before Spinoza'. But this argument could be sidestepped by means of an approach to the Stoics which de-emphasized their physics or cosmology, or which denied that the ethics and the physics had much to do with one another. As I have suggested above, the tendency of the new historiography of philosophy associated with Pufendorf was to examine ancient philosophy by subject-area rather than by school, and it is to one of the most important texts for the development of philosophical eclecticism itself that I now want to turn. 'An historical and critical account of the science of morality' by Jean Barbeyrac (1674–1744) was published as a preface to his celebrated edition of Pufendorf's treatise *Of the law of nature and nations* in 1706. This essay presented an account of the history of moral philosophy which was organized around a central argumentative thread, and which linked together ancient and modern ethics, culminating in his account of the natural law system of Pufendorf as the one which was uniquely able to come to grips with the problems bequeathed by the Grotian system, which itself had, in Barbeyrac's famous phrase, 'broken the ice' of the scholastics' moral thought. In chapter XXVII of this work, Barbeyrac discussed the Greek Stoics.[45]

In contrast to many of the Stoic and anti-Stoic writings of the seventeenth century, Barbeyrac's style was analytical rather than either apologetical or

[44] Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, pp. 544ff.

[45] Jean Barbeyrac, 'An historical and critical account of the science of morality,' in Pufendorf, *The law of nature and nations* (London, 1749), pp. 59–63.

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polemical. His points were backed up with precise references both to ancient texts and modern scholarship, and he generally followed the best authorities: Bayle, Jakob Thomasius, and Buddeus feature, for example, in his apparatus. He was careful also to make sure his observations were relevant to the philosophical subject matter under discussion. When he referred to the accusations of hypocrisy and vice which attend the lives of various Stoics, for example, he commented that 'these are personal faults, and extend not to their doctrines', and while he mentioned what were generally taken to be the least acceptable opinions of the Stoics – cannibalism, incest, the doctrine that all sins are equal, and the fact that 'What the Stoics said about the love of Beautiful boys is, at least, liable to very odd constructions'[46] – his rejection of these positions was peripheral to his main inquiry, for he understood the interest and importance of Stoic ethics to lie elsewhere.

Barbeyrac's distinctive move was explicitly to separate Stoic physics from its ethics. With regard to the former, he wrote: 'These principles, I must own, are monstrous; and the several philosophers of that Sect have, each in particular, added thereto some new Absurdities.'[47] With regard to the latter, his opinion was quite different, and fully in the tradition of Thomas Gataker: 'However, except a few things, nothing can be more beautiful than their Morality, very near approaching that of the Gospel, which alone is entirely conformable to the Dictates of right Reason.'[48] In contrast, therefore, to Buddeus's argument, which sought to yoke the Stoics' ethics to the physics in order to condemn the seemingly attractive ethics by highlighting its basis in the defective physics, Barbeyrac's strategy was to break the Stoics' system apart, and to examine their ethics with respect to the rest of the history of moral philosophy.

Considering the basis of Stoic ethics, therefore, Barbeyrac was careful to give one of its central claims, the notion of a life according to nature (*kata ton physin*), a rather vague reading, which had the effect of relaxing the notorious rigour of the Stoics' system:

> By this Nature, some of them meant directly the Constitution of the Human Nature; or that light of Reason by the help of which we discern what is truly suitable to our state, and condition; others meant universal Reason or the will of God … and others again meant both these things.[49]

The ethics of Marcus Aurelius were presented (following Gataker, to some extent, whom he cited as a 'learned Englishman')[50] as an example of how far natural reason could lead a sincere inquirer after truth, an account that presupposed that Marcus Aurelius was engaged in the kind of moral theory which might contribute to a 'science of morality'. Barbeyrac, who was himself attempting to contribute to that science of morality, drew these (fairly conventional) conclusions concerning the Stoics: that for all its fine content Stoic virtue could not be a complete account of the matter, for the Stoics did not present any hope of another life; that the

[46] Ibid., p. 63. [47] Ibid., p. 59. [48] Ibid. [49] Ibid., p. 60. [50] Ibid.

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Stoics did not properly acknowledge the immortality of the soul; and that they failed to appreciate that 'rigid and over-strained maxims are not at all proper to inspire virtue', or that there ought to be no place for the use of paradoxes in moral philosophy.[51]

The ancient ethical writer for whom Barbeyrac professed most admiration was Cicero, and he praised *De officiis* in particular, presenting its author as himself a kind of eclectic, who borrowed as he saw fit from the various doctrines of the sects.[52] On the face of it, this might seem to mark a retreat to a kind of Renaissance Ciceronianism, with Barbeyrac holding up Cicero's Stoic-like moral doctrine as the one to be preferred, whilst disdaining interest in the Stoics' philosophy of nature, but it is important to see that it is not. Barbeyrac's broader argument was that it was the modern natural rights tradition in general and the system of Pufendorf in particular which provided the right account of the proper justification of the content of ethics. From this standpoint, the Ciceronianism of the Renaissance represented the last appearance of the ancient doctrines, before they were swept away by the Grotian revolution in the post-sceptical 'science of morality'. And this was the revolution that gave rise to the modern natural law theory whose exponents were able to fashion an adequate reply to the sceptical criticisms of Cicero's ethics which had been formulated above all by Montaigne.[53]

On one level, therefore, Barbeyrac agreed with Buddeus: Stoic physics was full of error, and when the Stoic system was fully understood, it had to be rejected. But the contrasts in their respective styles and approaches were dramatic. Buddeus's historiography was one in which Stoicism as a system appeared in both ancient and modern contexts, substantially unaltered, whether in the theory of Chrysippus or Spinoza; Barbeyrac's presentation, by contrast, had no time for this kind of transhistorical argument: the true scientists of morality learn from one another's mistakes, neither simply replicating nor anathematizing the Stoics' ethics. By breaking up the unity of the Stoics' system, furthermore, Stoicism became a series of philosophical resources or arguments that could be drawn upon selectively, indeed, eclectically. In moving to insulate the Stoics' ethics from their physics, finally, Barbeyrac made an important move, and one that Montesquieu, Adam Smith, and others would reiterate later in the century.[54]

Buddeus Continued: The second place to trace out the influence of Buddeus's anti-Stoic polemic is in academic writing on the problem of understanding Stoic

[51] Ibid., p. 63.

[52] *De officiis* was 'that excellent work, so well known to the world … without Dispute, the best Treatise of Morality, that all Antiquity has produc'd; the most regular, the most methodical, and what comes the nearest to a full & exact system'. Ibid., ch. XXVIII, esp. p. 63.

[53] Ibid., p. 64.

[54] For Montesquieu, see especially his replies to Objection 1 in *A defence of* The spirit of the laws, in T. Evans, trans., *The complete works of M. de Montesquieu* (4 vols., London, 1777), IV. With regard to Smith, the discussion of Stoic ethics in *The theory of moral sentiments* substantially ignores the major topics in Stoic physics, and concludes with a rejection of the accuracy of the Stoics' conception of 'Nature'. Adam Smith, *The theory of moral sentiments*, ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (Oxford, 1976), pp. 272–93.

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philosophy, and one place where we can see the implications of this new approach to the history of philosophy being followed through is in the extensive commentaries prepared by another German Enlightenment academic, J. L. Mosheim (1694–1755) for his edition of Cudworth's *True intellectual system*, published in 1733.[55] Methodologically, Mosheim aligned himself with Buddeus's approach when he wrote that

> The discipline of this sect is not to be learned from the magnificent phrases of this or that Stoic, but the whole of it ought to be placed before our view as a system, and afterwards a judgment formed as to the utility and excellence of the several dogmas … Wherefore, if the dogmas or sayings of this or that Stoic be considered in themselves, we shall never be at a loss for arguments to justify and uphold the cause of this sect. For my part, I consider that the goodness and badness of any doctrine should be judged of from its fundamental principles, and from its general tenor and context, and that we should take into especial consideration, not what some have said or written, but what they ought to have said or written consistently with the rest of their opinions.[56]

Taken as a whole, Cudworth's text and Mosheim's notes constitute an interesting dialogue between two erudite representatives of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century scholarship, which ranged across the interpretation of philosophical authors both ancient and modern and discussed at length a number of topics in metaphysics and theology.[57]

On the face of it, Mosheim and Cudworth might not seem to be very far apart in their interpretations of Stoic theology. Cudworth had labelled the Stoics 'spurious theists', but refused to categorize them alongside other ancient atheists; Mosheim, too, was reluctant to employ the atheist label. But the different reasons each author leant on when drawing their similar conclusion were decisive in indicating their general attitude to Stoic theology. Cudworth's interest in Creation, intelligent design, and monotheism ultimately inclined him to a generous judgement concerning Stoic theology. Mosheim's concerns, by contrast, were those dictated by the Buddean anti-Spinozist polemic, and invited a harsher verdict. So, for example, while he held back from labelling the Stoics atheists ('That the Stoics professed a certain God or fiery nature, eternal, wise and provident, admits of no controversy'),[58] the two particular features of Stoic theology to which he drew attention in the ensuing exposition were precisely those canvassed by Buddeus when he was expounding the distinction between the two different kinds of atheists. The first of these was the question of God's freedom of action, for the Stoics 'openly acknowledged, that this God was unable to accomplish all that he wished, and that he did not possess the power of free agency, being bound down by the fate inherent in the very nature of matter';[59]

[55] Ralph Cudworth, *Systema intellectuale hujus universi*, ed. J. L. Mosheim (2 vols., Jena, 1733). Mosheim's notes are translated in *TIS*. [56] Mosheim, in *TIS*, II, p. 119.

[57] For examples of this dialogue on the proper understanding of Stoicism, see in particular Cudworth and Mosheim in *TIS*, I, pp. 62, 118, 195, 211, 300, 331, II, pp. 97–8, 105–7, 112–13, 119–22, 142–4, 270, 289–91, III, pp. 82, 145. [58] Ibid., II, p. 119. [59] Ibid., II, p. 120.

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and the second was the matter of 'external justice', or the divine justice of punishing and rewarding, which the Stoics denied, '[B]y doing which they extinguish in mankind all motive for the practice of virtue and destroy the very foundations of divine worship.'[60] Mosheim and Buddeus may not have agreed on the label, but they certainly were of one mind when it came to the substance of the Stoics' argument.

Buddeus, continued and revalued. The third place to look in order to find the influence of Buddeus's presentation of the Stoics is in the works of his most illustrious student Johann Jakob Brucker (1696–1770), whose colossal *Historia critica philosophiae* became the standard work of reference on the history of philosophy before the followers of Kant and of Hegel got to work on rewriting that history in order to place in the foreground the achievements of these latter-day masters.[61] Brucker is a far more significant figure than Buddeus, considered both in terms of his own historiographical achievement and of his influence upon academic posterity, but when it came to writing about the Stoics, Brucker was largely content to follow in the footsteps of his predecessor,[62] most characteristically when he observed that one should not judge the Stoics from words and sentiments 'detached from the general system' but that one should 'consider them as they stand related to the whole train of premises and conclusions'.[63]

Following Buddeus again, Brucker's judgement on Stoicism was resolutely hostile, and despite his 'critical' method, his discussion was couched in familiar terms: the Stoics wasted much time and threw away much ingenuity 'upon questions of no importance',[64] they 'largely contributed towards the confusion, instead of the improvement of science, by substituting vague and ill-defined terms' in place of 'accurate conceptions';[65] with respect to their moral philosophy, Brucker found that it was 'an ostentatious display of words, in which little regard was paid to nature and reason',[66] which, while it aimed at raising 'human nature to a degree of perfection before unknown' in fact served 'merely to amuse the ear' with 'fictions which can never be realised'; his conclusion was that 'a system of philosophy, which attempts to raise men above their nature, must commonly produce either wretched fanatics, or artful hypocrites'.[67] Turning then from the ethics to the physics, he resisted the move of those apologists for the Roman Stoics, who tried to equate Stoic fate with divine Providence:

> This doctrine, according to Zeno and Chrysippus (who herein meant to combat Epicurus's doctrine of the fortuitous concourse of atoms) implies an eternal and immutable series of causes and effects, within which all events are included, and to which the Deity himself is subject: whereas the later Stoics, changing the term Fate into the Providence of God,

[60] Ibid.

[61] Brucker, *Historia critica philosophiae*. For an English version of Brucker's discussions, see William Enfield, *The history of philosophy from the earliest times to the beginning of the present century drawn up from Brucker's* Historia critica philosophia (2 vols., Dublin, 1792).

[62] Santinello, ed., *Dall'età cartesiana a Brucker*, pp. 577, 597.

[63] Brucker, in Enfield, *The history of philosophy*, p. 342.

[64] Ibid., p. 339.

[65] Ibid., p. 339.

[66] Ibid., p. 340.

[67] Ibid., p. 341.

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discoursed with great plausibility on this subject, but still in reality retained the antient doctrine of universal fate.[68]

And in his discussion of the modern authorities who had written on the Stoics, Brucker consistently criticized the syncretist ambitions of Lipsius, Heinsius, Schioppius, and Gataker, appealing to the scholarship of Thomasius and Buddeus in support of his opinions.[69]

Brucker drew heavily on Buddeus when writing his account of Stoicism, and Brucker was, in turn, the chief source for Denis Diderot (1713–84) when he was compiling the articles on the history of philosophy for the *Encyclopédie*. Indeed, many articles on this subject essentially consist of lengthy passages from Brucker's work, translated into French and only very lightly edited, and the article on 'Stoicisme' is a very good example of this.[70] In this way, therefore, Buddeus's anti-Spinozist views on the nature of Stoicism ended up being presented substantially intact before a significant new reading public in the pages of the *Encyclopédie*. Presenting in outline form the basic principles of the Stoics, Diderot worked closely with Brucker's text and agreed with Buddeus when he wrote that 'it is not difficult to conclude from these principles that the Stoics were materialists, fatalists and, strictly speaking, atheists'.

The decisive difference this time around, of course, was that in Diderot's view of the matter, to be a materialist, fatalist atheist was no bad thing at all.

[68] Ibid., p. 343.

[69] On Gataker, Brucker wrote: 'I think it is clear enough from the above that this very erudite man was deceived by the study of the Stoa, and did not attend to the real hypotheses of the Stoics accurately enough and without prejudice, but certainly granted much to emotion and hatred, through which he persecuted the philosophy of Epicurus, and even tacitly attacked Gassendi himself, who was fighting on behalf of the most learned Epicurus; so there is no need to add more here.' Brucker, *Historia critica philosophiae*, IV, p. 500.

[70] *Encyclopédie*, 'Stoïcisme', XV, pp. 525–32.

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