

# Stoic Vices

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## 1 Introduction

The Stoics may have been the first to present their philosophy as a system. At the same time many observers from antiquity onwards have signaled inner tensions or, depending on their point of view, outright inconsistencies. Indeed, the Stoic claim acted as a standing invitation to opponents to prove them deficient in precisely this respect. One main example concerns evil: how can this be squared with the Stoic view of the world as providentially determined? The Stoics see the world not just as on the whole good but as the best of all possible worlds. Clearly, then, they are faced with the task of undertaking what since Leibniz has been known as a theodicy.<sup>1</sup> Cicero, Seneca, Plutarch, Galen, Alexander of Aphrodisias and other sources report on this debate between the Stoics and their opponents – Academics, Epicureans and Peripatetics. One of main ploys by which the Stoics sought to justify God's ways with the world consisted of combining a specific theory of value with a distinction of perspective. Death, disease, natural catastrophes are really not bad at all: from the individual human perspective they are to be seen as indifferent, i.e. as neither good nor bad.<sup>2</sup> We avoid such things by nature and *should* do so under normal circumstances, but when they do happen to us, the good and wise person – the Stoic sage as the standard of correct insight and action – will recognize that they do not affect the only thing that is truly valuable – his or her moral condition. Our success or failure in life, so the Stoic message runs, does not depend on external or bodily items; so let us not *make* ourselves dependent upon them.<sup>3</sup>

From a God's eye view, however, the blows of fortune may be seen in an even less disagreeable light. These represent what may be called the collateral damage of God's good governance. Chrysippus compared this with large houses where some husks and grains go astray although the estate is well-managed. The quoting author, Plutarch, has a point when he comments on

1 G.W. Leibniz, *Essais de Théodicée sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l'homme et l'origine du mal*, Amsterdam 1710.

2 On the indifferents in this particular connection see Sellars 2018, 1-4.

3 Similarly Long 1968, 329-330.

the insensitivity to human suffering shown here by Chrysippus.<sup>4</sup> The Stoics for their part invite us to consider that the interest of the whole prevails over that of the part and, consequently, to identify ourselves with the whole, that is, with the cosmic and divine perspective. They further shore up their position by pointing out that many things people complain about are really blessings in disguise. Thus vermin stimulate disciplined and cleanly behaviour on our part. Or, on a less mundane note, they provide an opportunity to show our moral strength rather than a ground for lamentation.<sup>5</sup>

But what about *human* or *moral* evil, i.e. vice? The Stoics introduce another distinction between moral and cosmic evil, for instance when it comes to apportioning responsibility. Thus Cleanthes in his *Hymn to Zeus* states that God is not responsible for what bad people do:

[...] No deed is done on earth, God, without your offices, nor in the divine ethereal vault of heaven, nor at sea, save what bad men do in their folly. But you know how to make crooked things straight and to order disorderly things. You love things unloved. For you have so welded into one all things good and bad that they all share in a single everlasting reason.<sup>6</sup>

Compare the following fragment from Chrysippus presented by Plutarch:

In his *On Nature* book 2 [Chrysippus] writes as follows: “Vice (*κακία*), by comparison with terrible accidents, has its own peculiar explanation. For in a way it does occur in accordance with the rationale (*λόγον*) of nature, and its occurrence is not, so to speak, useless in relation to the whole world. For otherwise the good would not exist either”. [...] Again in *On Justice* book 2, having described the gods as resistant to certain acts of wrong-doing, he says: “Vice cannot be removed completely, nor is it right that it should be removed”.<sup>7</sup>

Note that Chrysippus says that it would not be right to remove vice: it occurs in agreement with “the *λόγος* of the Nature”. So too Cleanthes, while denying God’s responsibility, yet presents vice as part of his well-governed world; or in other words, vice remains within *God’s* remit. Both Cleanthes and, in his wake,

4 Plut. *De Stoic Rep.* 1051c (*SVF* II, 1178); cf. Cic. *De Nat. Deorum* II, 167; III, 86.

5 Sen. *Prov.* 2.3-4, 6; Epict. *Diss.* 1.6.

6 *SVF* I Cleanthes 537, p. 122, ll. 11-13 = LS 541, 3; tr. Long-Sedley, slightly modified. Cf. Heraclit. 22B23, 67, 102 D.-K. Epict. *Diss.* 1.12.16.

7 Plut. *Stoic. Rep.* 1050F, 1051A-B (*SVF* II, 1181, part, 1182, LS 61R); tr. Long-Sedley.

Chrysippus hold that the moral good necessitates the existence of its opposite, vice, both logically and ontologically. The following fragment from Aulus Gellius bears this out:

Chrysippus' reply [scil. to those – probably Academics and Epicureans – who reject divine providence by reference to the reality of evil] [...] in his *On Providence* book 4 is as follows: “There is absolutely nothing more foolish than those who think that there could have been goods without the coexistence of evils (*mala*). For since goods are opposite to evils, the two must necessarily exist in opposition to each other and supported by a kind of opposed interdependence [...] for how could there be perception of justice if there were no injustices?<sup>8</sup> What else is justice if not the removal of injustice? Likewise, what appreciation of courage could there be except through the contrast with cowardice? Of moderation, if not from immoderation? How, again, could there be prudence if there were not imprudence opposed to it? Why do the fools not similarly wish that there were truth without there being falsity? For goods and evils, fortune and misfortune, pain and pleasure, exist in just the same way: they are tied to each other in polar opposition, as Plato said (...)”.<sup>9</sup>

Vice follows from our rationality, our moral capacity, which is marked by the possibility to choose wrongly. But even if many will go astray, a world with rational creatures is better than one without it.<sup>10</sup> In fact, vice has a function. Bad people, Chrysippus said, are like a couple of lewd lines in comedies: objectionable in themselves but making for a better play.<sup>11</sup> Think of Socrates and his

8 Heraclit. 22B67 D.-K.

9 Aulus Gellius 7.1.2-4 = *SVF* II, 1169-70 = LS 54Q; tr. Long-Sedley. Aulus Gellius refers to Plt. *Phd.* 60a-e. This is part of a longer coherent report; for *ibid.* 8-13 see *infra*, p. 202.

10 On rationality as a “poisoned gift” to humanity see the criticism levelled against the Stoics by Alexander, *De fato* p.199.14-22 Br. (*SVF* III, 658, part): If virtue and vice alone, in their [scil. the Stoics'] opinion are good and bad respectively, and no other creatures are capable of receiving either of them; and if the majority of humans are bad, or rather, if there have been just one or two good men, as their myths maintain, like some absurd and unnatural creature rarer than the phoenix of the Ethiopians; and if all bad persons are as bad as each other, without any differentiation, and all who are not wise are all alike mad, how could man not be the most miserable of all creatures in having vice and madness ingrown in him and allotted? (transl. Long-Sedley, modified). Cf. Cic. *De Nat. Deorum* 3.71: Given the moral condition of humankind it would have been better if rationality had not been bestowed upon it at all. Cf. Van Houte 2016, 211.

11 Plut. *Comm. not.* 14: 1065d (*SVF* II, 1181, third text).

despicable accusers: they succeeded in having him condemned but who was in the end the true victor?<sup>12</sup>

It is hard to distill a coherent theodicy from arguments such as these. In fact, there may be a limit to the extent to which we are justified in trying to do so. Chrysippus and other Stoics may have put forward such arguments as plausible (πιθανά) ones designed to tip the scales of dialectical debate in favour of their view of the world as providentially determined.<sup>13</sup> When it comes to Early Stoicism, we no longer have these arguments in their original context but find them embedded in later sources such as Cicero, Plutarch and Galen who use them for their own purposes, dialectical, polemical but never historiographical in the modern sense. Even so, sources such as Galen provide glimpses of the original contexts and the original debates in which the arguments functioned. In what follows I will draw mostly on the rich material contained in Galen, *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato* books IV and V, supplemented from other sources such as Cicero and Calcidius, in order to reconstruct the original early Stoic, mainly Chrysippean view, of the nature (§ 2) and origin (§ 3) of evil. The latter issue brings us back to the problem of how to account for and justify vice within the Stoic framework of providential determinism.

## 2 The Nature of Vice

As we have seen, vice or moral badness (κακία) is the opposite of virtue or moral excellence (ἀρετή) and there are vices corresponding to the different virtues such as injustice, immoderation, cowardice. We find accounts of vice

12 Epict. *Diss.* 4.1.162-169; Sen. *Prov.* 2.10-12, 4-5.

13 Thus Plutarch, *De Stoic Rep.* 1051c (*SVF* II, 1178) quotes Chrysippus as putting forward in his *On Substance* three explanations of how bad things can happen to innocent people: (1) instances of neglect compatible with good governance in general; cf. Cic. *De Nat. Deorum* II, 167; III, 86; (2) evil demons. Of these Chrysippus spoke as possible alternatives ("either ... or ...?"). Plutarch adds that according to Chrysippus (3) necessity is involved in large measure. "Necessity" is one of the names given by Plato in the *Timaeus* to the material with which the divine Demiurge has to work in creating the world but which resists his efforts (e.g. 47-48a). On Chrysippus' use of the *Timaeus* in this context see Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 7.1.10-11 (*SVF* II, 1169-1170, part; cf. Pl. *Ti.* 75b-c, with reference to Necessity), quoted and discussed *infra*, p. 202. On the role played by the Stoic material principle, see *infra*, p. 201-202. That Chrysippus is willing, in principle, to entertain the possibility that evil demons may have a hand in certain occurrences (2) must not be overlooked or dismissed, however distasteful this may be to the self-understanding of philosophers today; cf. Algra 2009. For general surveys of the arguments used by the Stoics see also Long 1968, Kerferd 1978, Sellars 2018.

and its species in Stoic texts dealing with emotion, which Stoics from Zeno onwards defined as an unnatural, excessive and irrational desire (or “impulse”, ὁρμή) of the intellect (διάνοια, also referred to as the soul’s ruling part, τὸ ἡγεμονικόν) and hence bad and to be avoided altogether.<sup>14</sup> But how exactly did they conceptualize the relation between emotion and vice? The following passage from Cicero is informative on this point:

Viciousness (*vitiositas*) is a disposition (*habitus*) or condition (*adfectio*) that is inconsistent in the whole of life and out of harmony with itself [...] It is the source of disturbances [scil. emotions, TT], which [...] are disorderly and agitated movements of the mind, at variance with reason and utterly hostile to peace of mind and of life. For they cause troubling and severe ailments, oppressing the mind and weakening it with fear. They also inflame the mind with excessive longing [...] a mental powerlessness, completely in conflict with temperance and moderation [...] So the only cure for those vices is situated in virtue alone.<sup>15</sup>

Here, as elsewhere in *Tusculans* book IV, Cicero may be taken to be drawing on the classic work of Stoic emotion theory, Chrysippus’ *On Affections* (or: *On Emotions*, Περὶ παθῶν), or at any rate an epitome of this work.<sup>16</sup> A considerable number of sometimes extensive verbatim fragments from the same work have been preserved by Galen in books IV and V of his *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*. Unlike Cicero, Galen is engaged in a fierce polemic against Chrysippus’ position on the nature and causation of emotion, using quotations from the latter’s treatise as proof-texts for his criticism. Another difference between the two sources lies in the fact that Cicero tends to suppress medical and physical aspects of Chrysippus’ argument whereas Galen does not, or at least most of the time. The following passages are a case in point:

Chrysippus in the first book *On Affections* confused the notion of disease by saying that disease in the soul is analogous to the state of the body, in which it is prone to fevers or diarrhoea or something of the kind [...] We must suppose that the disease of the soul is most similar to a feverish condition (καταστάσει) of the body in which fevers and chills do not

14 See Chrysippus *ap.* Gal. *PHP* IV, 1.14-2.18 (*SVF* III, 461-463).

15 Cic. *Tusc.* IV, 29, 34-35; not in *SVF*; tr. Long-Sedley 61D, modified.

16 See Tieleman 2003 ch. 6, esp. the conclusion 317-320.

occur at regular intervals but irregularly and at random from the disposition [διαθέσεως, scil. of the patient] and at the incidence of small causes.<sup>17</sup>

In the context Galen argues that Chrysippus confuses the notions of disease and mere proneness to disease. But he gives us enough of the latter's own words to enable us to see that Chrysippus described emotions as comparable to fits of fever: whereas the emotions are of limited duration, there is also an underlying diseased condition of which they are the symptoms or signs. The distinction between the disposition or character of the soul on the one hand and the emotions on the other is the same as that already propounded by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (11.4, 1105b19-27, who speaks of ἕξις for the disposition).<sup>18</sup> The sick character or disposition is characterized by Chrysippus not by reference to a non-rational power of the soul (as according to the Platonic position advocated by Galen) but, given Stoic "monistic" psychology, in terms of irrational movements or outburst: note the random nature of the emotions and the sheer irrationality manifested in their being triggered by *small* causes. It is typical of the diseased intellect to respond excessively to certain perceptions or thoughts. What Cicero sees as just an analogue or comparison spun out for longer than good stylistic taste permits,<sup>19</sup> represented for Chrysippus an analogy based on physical reality. The weak or diseased, emotion-prone intellect is not only marked by wrong value judgements about indifferent items and about the appropriateness of a certain emotional responses to them but is also weak in the physical sense of lacking a good tension in its pneumatic substance, which makes it apt to give in under the impact of an impression, i.e. thought.<sup>20</sup> Hence also Cicero's reference to the powerlessness and loss of control involved in vice. The emotional person tends to lend assent to an impression which involves a wrong judgement. But there is an important difference between the moral patient and the patient in the ordinary bodily sense. Whereas the latter may be affected by a disease without being responsible for it (as is probably the usual situation), the emotional person is not exonerated by any of these physical factors. Our assent remains "up to us" and the main and "sustaining" cause of the response is our moral condition determining it (the triggering

17 Gal. *PHP* V, 3.12; not in *SVF*; *ibid.* V, 2.13-14 = *SVF* III, 465; tr. Tieleman.

18 For the soul's disposition cf. also *SVF* I, 202, 198-200, 525 (from the last text it emerges that the Stoics further defined ἕξις as admitting of gradation in contrast with διάθεσις, which therefore applied to the excellent (or virtuous) soul).

19 Cic. *Tusc.* IV, 23. Cf. Tieleman 1999, 408.

20 Chrys. *ap.* Gal. *PHP* IV, 61-11 (*SVF* III, 473).

perception functions as the immediate cause).<sup>21</sup> As we shall see in the next section, this still leaves open the question of why people get weak, disease-prone minds in the first place.

Obviously the normative or moral aspect looms large, given Zeno's definition of emotion as unnatural, excessive and irrational.<sup>22</sup> The excess involved in an emotional response is linked to madness and mental blindness in the following fragment:

For these infirmities (ἀρρώστηματα) are not spoken of as being in the judgement that each of these things is good but also in respect of being given to them beyond what is natural, for which reason it is quite reasonable that some are called “woman-mad” and “bird-mad”.<sup>23</sup>

Here we have a further differentiation in the realm of vice. The notion of weakness or infirmity (ἀρρώστημα) involves the fact that immoderate people differ not only from unjust or cowardly ones but also among themselves by having an appetite for different kinds of objects – a fact which reflected in common parlance by such expressions as “women-mad” and “bird-mad”, both of which I take to refer to compulsive womanizers. In a fragment from his *Introduction to Good and Evil* preserved by another source, Athenaeus, Chrysippus refers to other infirmities such as being “wine-mad” and “meat-mad”.<sup>24</sup> For Chrysippus such common expressions contain truth and they should be aligned with common notions and the evidence provided by people's behaviour as the material from which he develops his argument.<sup>25</sup>

21 Cic. *Fat.* 39-44 (*SVF* II, 974); cf. Bobzien 1998, 255-259.

22 See *supra*, n. 14 with text thereto.

23 Chrysippus *ap.* Gal. *PHP* IV, 5.21-2 = *SVF* III, 480; tr. Tieleman.

24 Cf. Chrysippus *ap.* Athen. *Deipn.* XI, 464d (*SVF* III, 667).

25 Cf. also Chrysippus *ap.* Gal. *PHP* IV, 6.44-46 (*SVF* III, 478): “We take such leave of ourselves and get so far outside of ourselves and are so completely blinded in our frustrations that sometimes if we have a sponge or a piece of wool in our hands we lift it up and throw it as if we would thereby accomplish anything. If we had happened to have a knife or some other object, we should have used it in the same way [...] Often in this kind of blindness we bite keys and beat against the doors when they are not quickly opened, and if we stumble on a stone we take punitive measures, breaking it and throwing it somewhere, and all the while we use the strangest language. [...] From such actions one would grasp both the irrational nature of the affections and how blinded we are on such occasions, as though we had become different persons from those who had earlier engaged in philosophical conversations.” Cf. Philod. *De ira*, col. 1.10-20 Indelli, Sen. *De ira*, I, 1.2-4. The expression of anger serves a therapeutic purpose by driving home what an emotion really is, namely something very akin to madness if not a form of it.

### 3 The Origin of Vice

As we have seen in section 1, Cleanthes and Chrysippus argued that even moral badness serves the interest of the whole. But, as we have also noticed, this does not mean that God is responsible for it. According to Cleanthes, God governs everything *with the exception of* what evil men do. What these people “do” (ῥέξουσι) refers not to the actual consequences of their actions, which are fated and contribute to God’s grand scheme, but to their actions themselves in which their inner attitude expresses itself. This is the locus of vice, as has been confirmed by the passages reviewed in section 2, which locate vice in a diseased character. This vice is not innate for then God would be responsible after all.<sup>26</sup> Consider the following snippets of evidence:

[Cleanthes says] All humans have from Nature starting points (ἀφορμάς) towards virtue.<sup>27</sup>

The rational animal is perverted (διαστρέφεσθαι) sometimes through the persuasiveness of the external things, at other times through the conversation of the people around us, given that Nature provides unperverted starting points (ἀφορμάς).<sup>28</sup>

The empiricist character of Stoic epistemology means that there are no innate ideas, only the innate *capacity* for concept-formation including moral concepts. As Seneca puts it, Nature could not teach us virtue directly but planted the seeds (*semina*) of knowledge within us (Sen. *Ep.* 120,4-5).<sup>29</sup> These form the unperverted starting points towards virtue of which Cleanthes and Diogenes Laertius (who may be taken to reflect Early Stoic treatises) speak. Both refer to universal Nature or God as having planted this natural tendency towards virtue and knowledge within us. Even so perversion occurs. Its twofold source mentioned by Diogenes is further explained in three sources, Galen, Calcidius and Cicero. I start with Galen, who appears to be closest to Chrysippus’ original exposition on the cause of perversion from which Diogenes’ report ultimately derives. But in this particular case Galen may not draw directly on Chrysippus’ *On Affections* but on Posidonius’ work of the same title in which the latter

26 Alexander, *De fato* p.199.14-22 Br. (*SVF* III, 658, part), quoted *supra*, n. 9, certainly commits a polemical distortion by intimating that according to the Stoics vice is inborn.

27 Stob. *Ecl.* II, p.65,8 W. = *SVF* I, 566, part; LS 61L; tr. Long-Sedley, modified.

28 Diog. Laert. 7.89 = *SVF* III, 228; tr. Tieleman.

29 On the seeds of virtue see also Cic. *Tusc.* III, 2, *Fin.* v, 43, *Leg.* 1, 83 (*igniculi*); Sen. *Ep.* 94, 29, 108,8, *Ben.* IV, 6,6; Musonius, *Diss.* 2, 1.31. Cf. Dyson 2009, XV-XVI and Bonhoeffer 1894, 133.



addressed certain problems concerning emotion discussed by Chrysippus in book II of his treatise (e.g. laughing or weeping against one's will).<sup>30</sup> It is a moot point whether Posidonius diverged from Chrysippus as fundamentally as Galen presents it, saying that Posidonius found the solution to these problems by espousing the Platonic tripartite psychology since this made it possible to explain the phenomena in question by reference to non-rational soul-parts or powers – a solution unavailable within the framework of Chrysippus' monistic model of the soul. In some of these cases (like the ones just mentioned) Posidonius seems to have pressed for causal explanation where Chrysippus had been satisfied to accept the behaviours in question as just that – irrational and hence defying rational explanation.<sup>31</sup> The origin of vice is another problem addressed by Chrysippus and revisited by Posidonius. This time however more appears to be at stake: the issue of the soul's structure and that for divine providence:

9. Chrysippus was understandably puzzled about the origin of vice (κακίαν) [...] He was unable to discover how it is that children do wrong. These were all matters on which Posidonius, quite rightly in my opinion, criticized and refuted him. 10. For if children had an appropriate relationship (ῥεῖωται) to rectitude (τὸ καλόν) right from the start, vice would have had to be engendered in them not internally nor from themselves but solely from outside. 11. Yet even if they are brought up in good habits and properly educated, they are always seen to do something wrong. 12. Chrysippus too admits precisely this. He could of course have overlooked the observed facts and accepted only what agreed with his own assumptions, claiming that children will invariably become wise in the course of time if they are well brought up. 13. But he did not have the nerve to falsify the facts on this point at least; he accepted that even if children were reared by no one but a philosopher and never saw or heard any example of vice, they would still not necessarily become philosophers. 14. The cause of perversion (διαστροφῆς) is twofold, he says, one arises from the conversation (κατηχήσεως) of the majority of men, the other from the very nature (φύσεως) of things [...] 19. When he says that the persuasiveness of impressions (πιθανότητα τῶν φαντασιῶν) and conversation are responsible for the perversion which occurs in inferior men

30 Tieleman 2003, 122-131.

31 See prev. note.

concerning good and bad things, we should ask him why pleasure projects the persuasive impression that it is good, and pain that it is bad.<sup>32</sup>

Here, as elsewhere, Galen's point is that Chrysippus had no answer because he had ruled out non-rational soul-parts or powers. Posidonius, who, Galen tells us, valued truth more highly than the dogmas of his own school, came and saw that the solution lay in returning to the Platonic model, which does include such soul-parts. According to Galen, Chrysippus did not go so far as to deny the obvious fact that children develop moral flaws even if their social environment is perfect: a child reared by only a philosopher will therefore not turn ineluctably into a philosopher itself. The situation as such is rather unrealistic and more like a thought experiment than an experience widely shared and impossible for Chrysippus to ignore or deny. At any rate, Chrysippus argued (according to Galen: had to admit) that children are corrupted not only by what people say to them but by the "the very nature of things." The latter source of perversion is further explained by reference to the persuasiveness of the mental presentations or impressions, which leads us to mistake pleasurable things for good and painful things for bad (cf. Diogenes Laertius' report). In other words, under the impact of a pleasant presentation children assent to it as good due to its persuasiveness.

Chrysippus could hardly have settled for the social source of corruption as the only one: it would have merely pushed back the problem to the first humans. The question is whether he left the problem at a simple reference to the "nature of things" and the "persuasiveness of the presentations" they project on the tender and undeveloped children's intellects. This may be so, but it seems unlikely and at any rate there is more to say about this from a Stoic point of view. His position may not have been quite as unsatisfactory as Galen argues when considered in the light of Stoic thought.

The next testimony comes from the fourth century CE Christian author Calcidius' commentary on the Platonic *Timaeus* (which also deals with the origin of madness and vice: 86b-87b). It is presented on behalf of "the Stoics" and is further removed from the Chrysippean original than Galen's discussion. Yet it has preserved an element that may implement what Chrysippus had in mind when he thought about the way little children get corrupted:

32 Gal. *PHP* v, 5,9-26 De Lacy = Posidonius F169 EK, part; LS 65M, part; tr. De Lacy, Long-Sedley, modified.

The cause of error is manifold: the first is the one which the Stoics call the double perversion. This arises both from the things themselves and from the dissemination of what people say. For to those that have just been born or fall from the womb birth occurs with a certain amount of pain, since they move from a warm and humid dwelling into the cold and dryness of the air that engulfs them. Directed against this pain and coldness suffered by the children is, by way of an antidote (*medicinae loco*), the artificial measure (*artificiosa.... provisio*) taken by the midwives,<sup>33</sup> viz. that the newly born are cherished by means of warm water and alternating baths are used and a likeness of the maternal womb [is created] through the warming up and the cuddling, whereupon the tender body relaxes and becomes calm. Thus from both these sensations, of pain as well as pleasure, arises a kind of natural opinion (*opinion quaedam naturalis*) that everything pleasant and agreeable is good and that everything which by contrast brings sorrow is bad and to be eschewed.<sup>34</sup>

Chrysippus and the other Stoics took moral notions such as justice and the good to arise “by nature” as a result of experiential input (cf. their concept of preconception). It is, then, striking to see Calcidius here using the term “natural” in connection with mistaking physical pleasure as a good. But we have to give full weight to the qualification through *quaedam*, which expresses that it is not really what nature predisposes us to accept but rather that it is difficult to distinguish it from a natural conception, a point also stressed by Cicero (see below). Thus this presentation appears to us as natural and plausible, although from the Stoic point of view it cannot of course count as the self-certifying kataleptic presentation that gives us truth. Chrysippus himself uses the qualification *ὥσάνει* for akataleptic plausible presentations in a few verbatim fragments.<sup>35</sup> In a fragment from the second book of his *On the Good* Chrysippus explains how *Schadenfreude* may turn into pity – illustrating the sheer irrationality typical of emotion. Here he speaks of the psychic movements involved as natural even without qualification.<sup>36</sup> His use of “natural” here is similar to what we have in Calcidius in that he presents the behaviour in

33 Magee 2016 translates: “... specialized care provided by midwives is enlisted in place of medicine ...”.

34 Calcidius, *In Plat. Tim.* c.165 = *SVF* III, 229; tr. Tieleman.

35 *Ap. Gal. PHP* III, 1.25 (*SVF* II, 886) with Tieleman 1996, 157-157.

36 *Plut. De Stoic. Rep.* c. 25, 1046 (*SVF* III, 418): *καθ' ἑτέρας δὲ φυσικὰς φορὰς ἐκτρεπομένων ὁ ἔλεος γίνεται*. On psychic movements (*φοραί*) see Tieleman 1996, 160-168.

question as a regular occurrence known from experience but without implying that it is normative.

The pleasant experience mistaken for the good is instantiated by the action taken by the midwives: by bathing the new-born baby they imitate the warm and humid environment of the womb, by way of an antidote against the cold and dry environment in which it has just been cast.<sup>37</sup> One is reminded of the first intake of cold breath upon birth through which the physical *pneuma* of the baby solidifies and turns into psychic *pneuma*, which is marked by the functions of perception and movement (which represent the animal stage; several more years are needed before the child becomes fully rational).<sup>38</sup> This psychic *pneuma* has a degree of tension (τόνος) that is caused by the opposing tendencies of the hot and the cold, viz. expansion and contraction. It is this tension that determines also our resistance to the impact of presentations.<sup>39</sup> Seen in this light, it may be implied by the testimony from Calcidius that the midwives cut short the full process of pneumatic solidification in a baby whose soul is impressionable and still far from rational anyway. This is also indicated by a parallel testimony from Cicero's *On Laws*:

For our senses are not perverted by parent, nurse, teacher, poet, or the stage, nor led astray by the consensus of the multitude. But against our minds all sorts of plots are constantly being laid, either by those whom I have just mentioned, who, taking possession of them while still tender and unformed, colour and bend them as they wish, or else by that enemy which lurks deep within us, entwined in our every sense – that counterfeit of good (*imitatrix boni*), which is, however, the mother of all evils – pleasure (*voluptas*). Corrupted by her allurements, we fail to discern clearly what things are by Nature good, because the same seductiveness and itching does not attend them.<sup>40</sup>

Again we have the two sources of corruption. As to the physical and epistemic one, Cicero stresses our tendency to mistake pleasure of the good: they just appear very similar to us. In the immediately preceding context Cicero adverts to what is here summed up by “parent, nurse, teacher, poet, or the stage, nor

37 The background of this passage, with special reference to the “bad child” and ancient ideas on the moral effects of warm baths, is discussed by Vegetti 1983; cf. Tieleman 1999, 412–413.

38 *SVF* II, 806, on which see further Tieleman 1991, also for further evidence.

39 Kerferd 1978, 492.

40 *Cic. Leg.* I. xvii, 47 = *SVF* III, 229b; tr. Keyes, modified.

led astray by the consensus of the multitude,” that is to say, to the social source of corruption. In the preceding context of the quoted passage Cicero gives a particular twist to it, saying that the bewildering variety of opinions to which we are exposed makes us take recourse to our senses. This might have been a successful move were it not for the fact that the people mentioned have influenced our minds when they were still unformed and tender. This brings us back to the crucial moment upon which Calcidius or his source focus.

In chapters 166 and 167 Calcidius, too, expatiates on the social source of corruption, a long passage that Von Arnim was right in adding to ch. 165 as *SVF* III, 229, which we have quoted in large part above. and with which these two chapters clearly form one coherent piece. Relatives, educators, poets: all conspire in inculcating in us the wrong values, making us go after the wrong kind of glory and riches and so, ultimately, pleasure, which is opposed to virtue and good fame (i.e. for virtue).<sup>41</sup> At the end of ch. 166 and the beginning of 167 (*SVF* III, p. 54, 1-2) Calcidius repeats the two sources of perversion specified by Chrysippus and in the order in which they occur (*error ... ex rebus ortus... ex divulgatione succedit errori supra dicto*). After once again listing some forms of social corruption Calcidius interrupt himself saying that these do not constitute the most important source of vices: this is the fact that body and soul are welded (or: grown) together (*maxima vero vitiorum excitatio est in corporis et animi concretione, ibid. p. 54, 10*). Indeed, it was the bodily pleasure of the babies who were bathed that made them identify pleasure with the good, or at least laid the foundation for that idea. It then will be crucial whether one will receive the right education. If our teachers are Epicureans they can build on and will further strengthen a common yet perverse tendency that has been in us from the earliest moments after birth.

The reference made by Calcidius to our embodied state as a source of trouble invites comparison with other Stoic texts reflecting on the status of our body. If God could have made us “unclad souls” (*nudos animos*) he would have done so, Seneca says, but since he had to create us with bodies he made the best of it (*Ep.* 66.3). But clearly, then, the good intention of making rational creatures has a downside which he does not want but which is inevitable given his intention. Stoics link this to the fact that God as the active cause

41 We have very similar passages from Cic. *Leg.* 1, xi, 31 (*SVF* III, 23), Sen. *Ep.* 115, 11-14 (*SVF* III, 231), both aimed at explaining why pleasure is so often mistaken for the good. That many people opt for pleasure as the highest good had already been stated by Aristotle *Eth. Nic.* 1.5, 1095b14-17. The opposition between the moral good and pleasure was the central theme of Chrysippus' anti-Epicurean treatise *On the Noble and Pleasure*, in no less than ten books; see the evidence collected in *SVF* III, 197-200.

necessarily expresses himself in matter, which can also be called necessity, as in the Platonic *Timaeus*. According to Plutarch Chrysippus said about the presence of evil in the best of all possible worlds: “[...] there is also a considerable involvement of necessity” (Plut. *Stoic. Rep.* 1051c = *SVF* II, 1178). In this connection we may compare the following testimony from Gellius based on Chrysippus’ *On Providence*:

In his judgment it was not nature’s principal intention to make men liable to disease; that would never have been fitting for nature, the creator and mother of all good things. But, he adds, while she was bringing about many great works and perfecting their fitness and utility, many disadvantageous things accrued as inseparable from her actual products. These, he says, were created by nature (*per naturam*),<sup>42</sup> but through certain necessary “concomitances” (which he calls *κατὰ παρακολούθησιν*). Just as, he says, when nature was creating human bodies, it was required for the enhancement of our rationality and for the very utility of the product that she should construct the head of very thin and tiny portions of bone, but this utility in the principal enterprise had as a further, extraneous consequence the inconvenience that the head became thinly protected and fragile to small blows and knocks – so too illnesses and diseases were created while health was being created. Likewise, he says, while through nature’s plan virtue was being created for men, at the same time vices (*vitia*) were born, through their contrary relationship.<sup>43</sup>

It was not God’s intention to make us liable to fall ill but his intention to produce the best possible result, namely a creature possessed of rationality came at an inevitable price: our perceptiveness and rationality made it necessary that the head was constructed out of thin bone even though this made us more vulnerable.<sup>44</sup> The example is taken from the Platonic *Timaeus* 75b-c but note that in Gellius there is not just the opposition between rationality and vulnerability but between health and disease. At the end of the passage Chrysippus according to Gellius draws an analogy with virtue and vice familiar from Chrysippean passages we have been discussing in section 2: virtue and vice are

42 Most editors (followed by Von Arnim) however add <non> (given by the *codices deteriores*) or <neque>, which yields “not through Nature, but through ...”. But this obscures the intended meaning viz. Nature’s creative activity necessarily entails certain drawbacks. Marache in the Budé edition and Long-Sedley correctly omit the addition of a negative. See Marache’s note *ad loc.*

43 Aulus Gellius 7.1.8-13 = *SVF* II, 1169-1170, part = LS 54Q, part; tr. Long-Sedley, modified.  
44 Cf. Kerferd 1978, 493.

related to each other as bodily health and disease are. Virtue and vice are in a “close relation of contrariety.” Apparently our capacity for virtue required there to be a body and so, as a *necessary* “concomitance”, a capacity for vice.

#### 4 Conclusion

As we have seen at the outset of this inquiry, it makes sense, and finds support in Stoic sources, to distinguish between cosmic and moral evil when it comes to understanding the Stoic bid to reconcile their view of the world as the best possible with evil (section 1). Focusing on moral badness, or vice, we found relevant Stoic and in particular Chrysippean texts explaining it in terms of diseased and weak intellects marked by emotional outbursts (section 2). But the phenomenology of vice is one thing; its origin another. The tensions inherent in the Stoic world-view are encapsulated in their combining our innate capacity for virtue with our early (if not irremediable) moral corruption. But challenged by their philosophical opponents they were not as incapable of defending themselves as is intimated by critics such as Galen and Plutarch. Chrysippus and other Stoics pointed to our corporeal, embodied state and, in connection, God having to realize his good creative intention by using matter. The reference made by Chrysippus to necessity and examples such as the construction of the human skull revealed the inspiration of the Platonic *Timaeus*, in which, as is well known, the Demiurge is constrained by a resistant entity going by various names including “Necessity”, which nonetheless he must use (or “persuade”) in creating the cosmos. This resistant material was soon identified by Aristotelians and Stoics with their own notion of matter. But their notion of matter as the necessary substrate of all change is marked by passivity in contrast with its Platonic predecessor. In regard to the problem of evil this feature did not however prevent the Stoics from seeking a solution in terms of matter too.

The Stoic appeal to soul's corporeality and its being interwoven with the body are not given due attention by our main source, Galen. But this is quite in line with Galen's insistence upon non-rational soul-parts or powers as indispensable for any good theory of emotion and hence vice. In fact, Chrysippus seems to have assigned the functions fulfilled by non-rational soul-parts in Plato to the unitary soul's corporeality and close conjunction with the body. We have found a few indications pointing in that direction in non-Galenic testimonies, most notably Calcidius and Gellius. In addition, the problem of vice and the solution sought by the Stoics led us back to the cosmic perspective of the good God and the unintentional side-effects of his creative activity.

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