

Stoics and Epicureans

The Classical World: Spring 2010

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References

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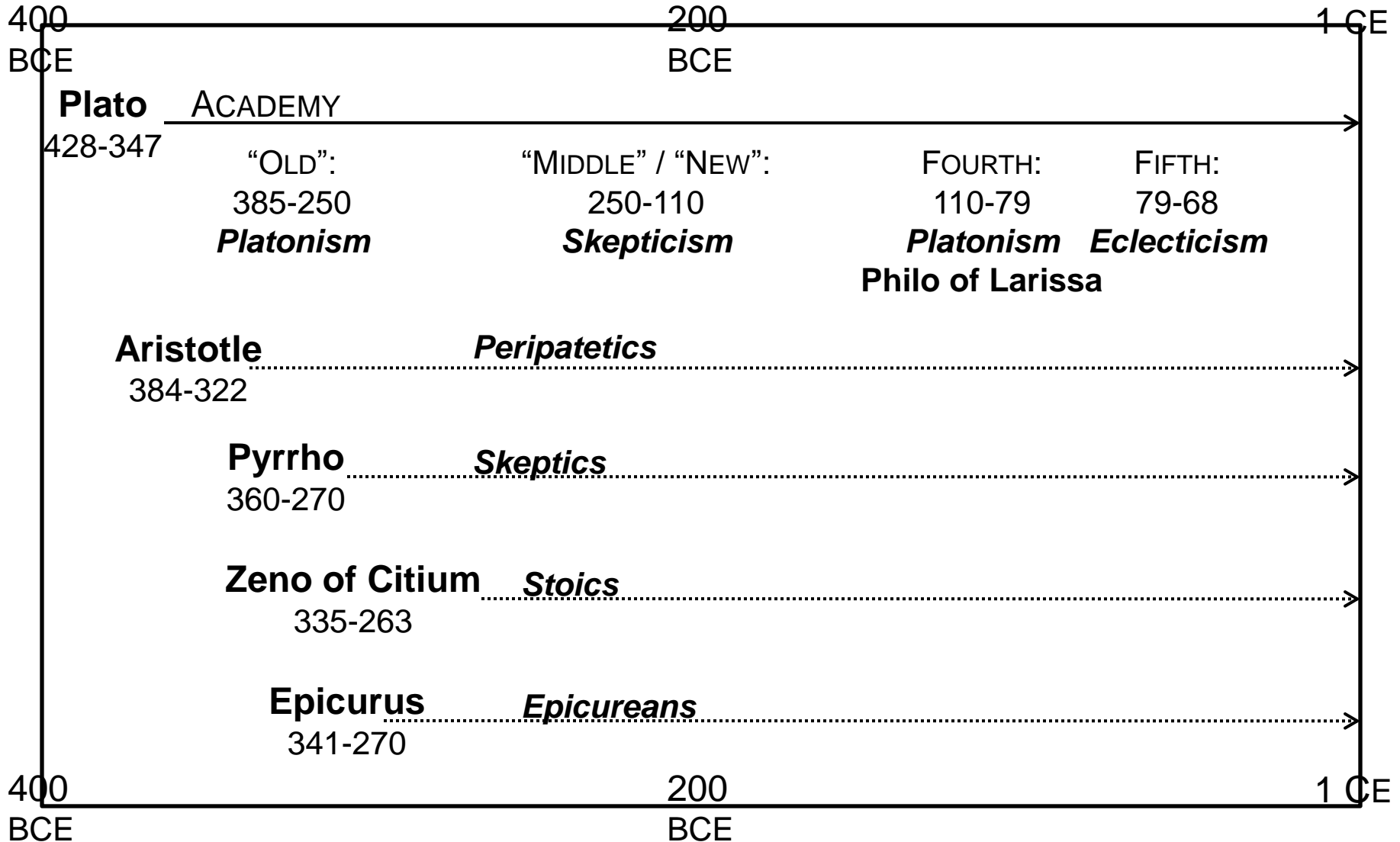
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Hellenistic Philosophy



Central Figures

Stoics

Zeno of Citium (335-263 BCE)

Cleanthes (331-232 BCE)

Chrysippus (280-207 BCE)

Panaetius of Rhodes (185-109 BCE)

Posidonius of Apamea (135-50 BCE)

Seneca (4 BCE-65 CE)

Epictetus (55-135 CE)

Marcus Aurelius (121-180 CE)

Epicureans

Epicurus (341-270 BCE)

Philodemus (110-35 BCE)

Lucretius (99-55 BCE)

Diogenes of Oinoanda (ca. 2nd c. CE)

Physics and Metaphysics

Stoics *contra* Plato and Aristotle

Corporealism = What exists are bodies

*“[Zeno] disagreed with [Peripatetics and Academics] in that he thought it totally impossible for anything to be effected by what lacked body ... and indeed he held that whatever effected something or was affected by something must be body” (Cicero, *Academica*, 1.39).*

Physics and Metaphysics

Epicureans *contra* Plato and Aristotle

Corporealism = What exists are bodies (and void)

“...whatever exists as a separate entity will either act upon something or submit to being acted upon by other things, or its nature will be such that things can exist and happen in it. But nothing can act or be acted upon, unless it is corporeal; and again, nothing except void and vacuity can provide space” (Lucretius, On the Nature of Things, 1.440-5).

Physics and Metaphysics

Corporealism = What exists are bodies

(cf. *materialism* = what exists is matter)

1. To be real is to enter into causal relationships.
2. Only bodies (and the void) enter into causal relationships.
3. Therefore, only bodies (and the void) are real.

Epicurean Physics

“Atoms and the void”

“Moreover, the totality is [made up of] bodies and void; for in all cases sense-perception itself testifies that bodies exist... . And if there did not exist that which we call void and space and intangible nature, bodies would not have any place to be in or move through, as they obviously do move. Beyond these two things [viz. bodies and void] nothing can be conceived...” (Epicurus, Letter to Herodotus 10.39-40).

Epicurean Physics

Atoms move mechanically in the void

They sometimes swerve unpredictably

“when the atoms are being drawn downward through the void by their property of weight, at absolutely unpredictable times and places they deflect slightly from their straight course, to a degree that could be described as no more than a shift of movement”
(Lucretius, On the Nature of Things, 2.218-220).

Epicurean Metaphysics

The gods exist.

Epicurean Metaphysics

The gods exist.

They aren't concerned with humans.

Epicurean Metaphysics

The gods exist.

They aren't concerned with humans.

Religion is pernicious – it stirs up false fears.

Epicurean Account of the Soul

The soul is a *material* part of the body

Composed of atoms

Atoms of the soul are small and move about quickly

Epicurean Account of the Soul

The soul is a *material* part of the body

Composed of atoms

Atoms of the soul are small and move about quickly

Two parts: the mind and the spirit

The mind = reason and emotion – located in the breast

The spirit = sensation – diffused throughout the body

Epicurean Account of the Soul

Free will is due to swerves of atoms

“...if all movements are invariably interlinked, if new movement arises from the old in unalterable succession, if there is no atomic swerve to initiate movement that can annul the decrees of destiny and prevent the existence of an endless chain of causation, what is the source of this free will possessed by living creatures all over the earth? What, I ask, is the source of this power of will wrested from destiny, which enables each of us to advance where pleasure leads us, and to alter our movements ... at the direction of our own minds?” (Lucretius, On the Nature of Things, 2.252-7)

Epicurean Account of the Soul

The soul is mortal

Epicurean Account of the Soul

The soul is mortal, because:

- *The soul develops with the body*

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The soul is mortal, because:

- The soul develops with the body
- *The soul is divisible*

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The soul is mortal, because:

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- *The soul is integrated into the body*

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- The soul develops with the body
- The soul is divisible
- The soul is integrated into the body
- *The soul depends upon the body to sense and feel*

Epicurean Account of the Soul

The soul is mortal, because:

- The soul develops with the body
- The soul is divisible
- The soul is integrated into the body
- The soul depends upon the body to sense and feel
- *We have no recollection of prior existence*

Epicurean Account of the Soul

The soul is mortal, but death is nothing to fear

“Death, then, is nothing to us and does not affect us in the least...” (Lucretius, 3.830 ff.).

Epicurean Account of the Soul

The soul is mortal, but death is nothing to fear

“If it happens that people are to suffer unhappiness and pain in the future, they themselves must exist at that future time for time to befall them; and since death takes away this possibility ..., you may be sure that there is nothing to fear in death...” (Lucretius, 3.830 ff.).

Epicureanism on The Good Life

“The unwavering contemplation of these enables one to refer every choice and avoidance to the health of the body and the freedom of the soul from disturbance, since this is the goal of a blessed life. For we do everything for the sake of being neither in pain nor in terror. As soon as we achieve this state every storm in the soul is dispelled... . For we are in need of pleasure only when we are in pain because of the absence of pleasure, and when we are not in pain, then we no longer need pleasure. And this is why we say that pleasure is the starting-point and goal of living blessedly” (Epicurus, Letter to Menoeceus, 10.128).

Epicureanism on The Good Life

The only good = pleasure

Pleasure is primarily the absence of pain

Pleasure is not those of indulging the appetites

Letter to Menoeceus, 10.131-2.

How to avoid pain?

Epicureanism on The Good Life

How to avoid pain?

“Nothing is more blissful than to occupy the heights effectively fortified by the teaching of the wise, tranquil sanctuaries from which you can look down upon others and see them wandering everywhere in their random search for the way of life. ... O minds of mortals, blighted by your blindness!” (Lucretius, 2.8-14)

Epicureanism on The Good Life

How to avoid pain?

“For, just as children tremble and fear everything in blinding darkness, so we even in daylight sometimes dread things that are no more terrible than the imaginary dangers that cause children to quake in the dark. This terrifying darkness that enshrouds the mind must be dispelled not by the sun’s rays and the dazzling darts of day, but by study of the superficial aspect and underlying principle of nature”

(Lucretius, 2.8-14)

Epicureanism on The Good Life

How to avoid pain?

- By calming the mind and dispelling fear

Epicureanism on The Good Life

How to avoid pain?

- By calming the mind and dispelling fear
- We can dispel fear by coming to understand the nature of the world

Epicureanism on The Good Life

How to avoid pain?

- By calming the mind and dispelling fear
- We can dispel fear by coming to understand the nature of the world
- We can understand the nature of the world through philosophy

Stoic Metaphysics

Matter is inert; God/Logos is active

“They [the Stoics] believe that there are two principles of the universe, the active and the passive. The passive, then, is unqualified substance, i.e., matter, while the active is the rational principle [logos] in it, i.e., god. For he, being eternal and penetrating all of matter, is the craftsman of all things” (Diogenes Laertius, 7.134).

Stoic Metaphysics

Cf. Aeneid 6.724-9:

“In the beginning Spirit fed all things from within, the sky and the earth, the level waters, the shining globe of the moon and the Titan’s star, the sun. It was Mind that set all this matter in motion. Infused through all its limbs, it mingled with that great body...”

Stoic Metaphysics

god = Zeus = *Logos* = rational principle

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***Logos* is *pneuma* – a non-material body**

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***Pneuma* (*Logos*) interpenetrates all matter**

Stoic Metaphysics

god = Zeus = *Logos* = rational principle

***Logos* is *pneuma* – a non-material body**

***Pneuma* (*Logos*) interpenetrates all matter**

No void; matter/*pneuma* is continuous

Stoic Metaphysics

Zeno: god/Logos is (creative) Fire

Stoic Metaphysics

Zeno: god/Logos is (creative) Fire

***Cosmos* is perfect**

“Just as a target is not set up to be missed, in the same way nothing bad by nature happens in the world” (Epictetus, Handbook, 27).

Stoic Metaphysics

Zeno: god/Logos is (creative) Fire

***Cosmos* is perfect**

***Cosmos* begins in fire and ends in fire**

Stoic Metaphysics

Zeno: god/Logos is (creative) Fire

***Cosmos* is perfect**

***Cosmos* begins in fire and ends in fire**

***Cosmos* repeats just as it did before**

Stoic Metaphysics

Events are entirely determined – providence

Chance = events we cannot explain

How to distinguish the *possible* from the *impossible*?

Possibility = that which is not prevented

Stoic Account of the Soul

Our souls = parts of the pervasive *pneuma*

We are all interconnected with *Logos*

Stoic Account of the Soul

The ruling part (hêgemonikon) of the soul is rational

The soul can survive the death of the body, but its fate afterward depends on how we live our lives.

Stoic Account of the Soul

If the *cosmos* is determined, what freedom do we have?

“Some things are up to us and some are not up to us. Our opinions are up to us, and our impulses, desires, aversions Our bodies are not up to us, nor are our possessions, our reputations, or our public offices...” (Epictetus, *Handbook*, 1).

Stoicism on the Good Life

The only good = virtue

“Thus Zeno first, in his book On the Nature of Man, said that the goal was to live in agreement with nature, which is to live according to virtue. For nature leads us to virtue. ... Again, ‘to live according to virtue’ is equivalent to living according to the experience of events which occur by nature.... For our natures are parts of the nature of the universe. Therefore, the goal becomes ‘to live consistently with nature,’ i.e., according to one’s own nature and that of the universe” (Diogenes Laertius, 7.87-8).

Stoicism on the Good Life

Live according to nature: Epictetus' *Handbook*

“Do not seek to have events happen as you want them to, but instead want them to happen as they do happen, and your life will go well” (8).

“At each thing that happens to you, remember to turn to yourself and ask what capacity you have for dealing with it. If you see a beautiful boy or woman, you will find the capacity of self-control for that. If hardship comes to you, you will find endurance. If it is abuse, you will find patience. And if you become used to this, you will not be carried away by appearances” (10).

Stoicism on the Good Life

Live according to nature: Epictetus' *Handbook*

“Remember that what is insulting is not the person who abuses you or hits you, but the judgment about them that they are insulting. So when someone irritates you be aware that what irritates you is your own belief. Most importantly, therefore, try not to be carried away by appearance, since if you once gain time and delay you will control yourself more easily” (20).

Cicero

Highly influential, until 19th century

From Ambrose to Voltaire

Displaced in 19th century – conservatism

Much knowledge of early Stoicism due to Cicero

Cicero

Some Philosophical Texts:

On the Republic

On Laws

On Obligations

Tusculan Disputations

On the Nature of the Gods

On Moral Ends

On Divination

On Friendship

On Fate

Academica

Aristotle's Chart of Virtues

<u>Feeling or activity</u>	<u>Virtue</u>	<u>Vice of excess</u>	<u>Vice of deficiency</u>
Fear	BRAVERY	Cowardice	(nameless)
Confidence	BRAVERY	Rash	(nameless)
Pleasures & pains	TEMPERANCE	Intemperance	Insensibility
Giving money (small)	GENEROSITY	Wastefulness	Ungenerosity
Taking money (small)	GENEROSITY	Ungenerosity	Wastefulness
Giving & taking money (large)	MAGNIFICENCE	Ostentation, Vulgarly	Stinginess
Honor & dishonor	MAGNANIMITY	Vanity	Pusillanimity
Small honors	(NAMELESS)	Honor-lover	Indifference to honor
Anger	MILDNESS	Irascibility	Inirascibility
Truth-telling	TRUTHFULNESS	Boastfulness	Self-deprecation
Pleasures in amusements	WIT	Buffoonery	Boorishness
Pleasures in daily life	FRIENDLINESS	Ingratiation, Flattery	Quarrelsomeness, Ill-temper
Various	JUSTICE	Doing injustice	Suffering injustice

Cicero

Groups:

I: 20-41 (pp. 9-17)

II: 42-60 (pp. 17-22)

III: 61-78 (pp. 22-28)IV:

78-92 (pp. 28-33)

V: 93-106 (pp. 33-37)

VI: 107-128 (pp. 37-44)

VII: 129-151 (pp. 44-51)

Questions:

- Where do Aristotle and Cicero **agree** on the virtues?
- How does Cicero's account of the virtues **differ** from Aristotle's (as you remember Aristotle)?
- What virtues does Cicero discuss that **don't seem to fit** in Aristotle's chart?
- What **other concerns** about obligations does Cicero have that don't fit well with Aristotle's account of the virtues?