Advising the Cosmopolis

Eric A. Brown
Washington University St Louis, eabrown@wustl.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://orb.binghamton.edu/sagp

Part of the Ancient History, Greek and Roman through Late Antiquity Commons, Ancient Philosophy Commons, and the History of Philosophy Commons

Recommended Citation
ADVISING THE COSMOPOLIS

ERIC BROWN
Department of Philosophy, Box 1073
Washington University
St. Louis, MO 63130
eabrown@twinearth.wustl.edu

ABSTRACT

Plutarch charges that Stoic theory is inconsistent with Stoic political engagement no matter what they decide to do, because the Stoics' endorsement of the political life is inconsistent with their cosmopolitan rejection of ordinary politics (Stoic.rep., ab init.). Drawing on evidence from Chrysippus and Seneca, I develop an argument that answers this charge, and I draw out two interesting implications of the argument. The first implication is for scholars of ancient Stoicism who like to say that Stoicism is apolitical. The argument I reconstruct turns on the political importance of the practice of giving and taking advice, and in this way makes clear a philosophically significant way in which Stoic ethics is itself political. The second implication is for moral and political theorists who are quick to contrast cosmopolitanism with patriotic political engagement. My Chrysippean and Senecan argument shows how Stoics could envision local political engagement as an instantiation of cosmopolitan commitments.
Introduction

If you believe that philosophy is the art of living, then you should be bothered to learn that your philosophical doctrines are at odds with your life. That is why the ancient Stoics are put in a particularly awkward situation by the two criticisms with which Plutarch begins his study On Stoic Self-Contradictions. Plutarch first points out that the principal Stoics Zeno, Cleanthes, and Chrysippus failed to live in agreement with their recommendation that a person should engage in politics. Then he charges that those Stoics who did engage in politics contradicted Stoic doctrine even more severely, since Stoic doctrine holds that the cosmos is, as it were, a polis, while ordinary poleis (or "polises") do not deserve the name.

Many of the alleged self-contradictions that Plutarch dredges up are based on misunderstandings or polemical distortions. But these initial criticisms have remarkable staying power. The claims that the Stoics were damned if they did engage in politics and damned if they did not together imply that there is an underlying inconsistency between their endorsement of political engagement and their commitment to the cosmopolis in place of the local polis, and allegations of this underlying inconsistency have not disappeared. In fact, we are told again and again by eminent scholars that Stoicism is fundamentally apolitical.1 Moreover, we are told again and again by eminent moral philosophers and political theorists that attention to the community of all human beings at the expense of recognizing special political ties to the locals is not possible for us.2 Both of these contemporary claims raise questions for our understanding of the Stoics. If Stoicism is fundamentally apolitical, then why do the Stoics recommend the political life? And if cosmopolitan disregard for local attachments is fundamentally impossible, then how do the Stoics recommend the political life?

---

1 See, e.g., Annas, The Morality of Happiness, 302-311. (Here and throughout the notes are imperfect. I apologize for this and hope that imperfect notes will be received better than an absence of notes.)

2 Isaiah Berlin, e.g., said in an interview that human beings must "have kith and kin and feel closer to some people than to others."
I believe that we can answer these questions, that the Stoics have a consistent view relating political engagement to the cosmopolis, and that they have ready answers to Plutarch's ancient charges. Moreover, I believe that a proper understanding of how the Stoics relate political engagement to the cosmopolis calls into question both of the claims persistently made nowadays.

In what follows, I develop and justify the interpretation of Stoicism that sustains these beliefs. Instead of talking nebulously of "Stoic ethics" and conflating what are in fact several different Stoicisms, however, I concentrate on two Stoics for whom we have a reasonable supply of evidence: the leading Greek of the third century BCE, Chrysippus, and a prolific Roman of the first century CE, Seneca. I construct a response to Plutarch's criticisms that consists of four main claims, and for each I shall attempt to show how and why the claim is endorsed by both Chrysippus and Seneca. Then I conclude by making explicit how the four-stage response to Plutarch has relevance to the contemporary concerns. On the one hand, I suggest that our scholars who have skipped over the allegedly apolitical Stoics' interests in the political life have missed one of the most interesting features of Stoicism, its emphasis on advice as a topic of moral philosophy. On the other hand, I suggest that our moral and political thinkers who have insisted on the incompatibility of cosmopolitan commitments and "real" politics have missed one of the most philosophically interesting challenges emanating from the Stoic tradition.

1.

The first step in the Stoic position I mean to explicate concerns the point of engaging in politics. Both Chrysippus and Seneca hold that the goal of politics is to help people become better. Diogenes Laertius reports Chrysippus' view of this quite clearly: [A] "[The Stoics] say that the sage will participate in politics, if nothing prevents him—so says Chrysippus in the first book of On Lives—for they say that he will restrain vice and promote virtue."\(^3\) Seneca records this view

\(^3\) DL VII 121: πολιτεύσεσθαί φασι τὸν σοφὸν ἀν μὴ τι κωλύῃ, ὡς φησὶ Χρύσιππος ἐν πρώτῳ Περὶ Βίων· καὶ γὰρ κακίαν ἐφέξειν καὶ ἐπ' ἀρετῆς παρορμήσειν.
more indirectly. In *De Tranquillitate Animi*, he has Serenus express the desire to engage in politics in order to be "serviceable and useful" to others,⁴ and in *De Beneficiis*, as we shall see, he emphasizes that improving others is the best way of being serviceable and useful.

Neither Chrysippus nor Seneca is saying merely that bettering others is the abstract goal of politics in general. Rather, it is the goal aimed at by a human being engaged in politics. In other words, our Stoics explain the agent's engagement in politics by appealing to the agent's desire to better others. This point is worth emphasizing, as it depends upon embedding the work of politics into the motivational structure of the human agent. (It depends, in other words, on conceiving of the human being as a political animal.) If we are looking for the Stoic account of why a person should engage in politics, we should look at the Stoic account of desiring to help others. We should look, that is, at the virtue of beneficence.

The connection between beneficence and the point of politics can be drawn in two parts. First, Chrysippus and Seneca explain the desire to be beneficent by appealing to the following simple argument. The good human life that is our aim is a virtuous life; possession of any virtue requires possession of all the virtues; and beneficence is a virtue; therefore, the good human life that is our aim requires beneficence. Therefore, we have reason to be beneficent.

There is no doubting that both Chrysippus and Seneca are committed to this little piece of reasoning concerning beneficence. The first premise—that the good life is a virtuous life—is absolutely ubiquitous in the surviving writings, though it is perhaps worth mentioning how controversial the claim is. The Stoic view is not merely that virtue is necessary for happiness or even that it is sufficient for happiness. Rather, the Stoics hold that since happiness is the goal of life (τὸ τέλος) and the goal of life is living in accordance with virtue, living virtuously just is happiness.⁵

---

⁴ Seneca, *Tranq* 1.10: Placet imperia praecptorum sequi et in mediam ire rem publicam; placet honores fascisque non silicet purpura aut virgis abductum capessere, sed ut amicis propinquisque et omnibus civibus, omnibus deinde mortalibus paratior utiliorque sim.

⁵ The evidence frequently concentrates on the (controversial enough) claim of virtue's sufficiency for happiness, but there are occasional clarifications that make the more precise connection explicit. See, e.g., Plutarch, *Stoic rep* 1046de, for the distinction between Epicurus' view of the productive sufficiency of virtue and Chrysippus' view of
Moreover, living virtuously requires possessing all the virtues since the virtues are a unity. Both Chrysippus and Seneca are quite clear about this second premise. Diogenes Laertius again fills us in about Chrysippus:

[The Stoics] say that the virtue entail each other and that anyone who has one has them all, since they have their theorems in common, as Chrysippus says in Book One of his On Virtues, Apollodorus says in his Old-School Physics, and Hecaton says in Book Three of his On Virtues.\footnote{DL VII 125: Τάς δέ ἀρετὰς λέγουσιν ἀντακλουθεῖν ἀλλήλαις καὶ τὸν μίαν ἔχοντα πάσας ἔχειν· εἶναι γὰρ αὐτῶν τὰ θεωρήματα κοινά, καθάπερ Χρύσιππος ἐν τῷ πρῶτῳ Περί ἀρετῶν φησιν. 'Απολλόδωρος δὲ ἐν τῇ Φυσικῇ κατὰ τὴν ἀρχαίαν. 'Εκάτων δὲ ἐν τῷ τρίτῳ Περί ἀρετῶν. For Chrysippus' position in the dispute about how exactly to conceive of the unity and plurality of the virtues, see especially Plutarch, Stoic rep 1034cd and 1046ef, with Schofield, "Ariston of Chios and the Unity of Virtue."}

Seneca registers his agreement with this Stoic commonplace frequently. Consider, for example, his remark that "right reason is unified and simple."\footnote{Ep 66.11: Una enim est ratio recta simplexque. See also Ep 85 and 92. more consideration here}

From the first two commitments, it follows that a good human life requires the possession of each and every virtue. So now it can be simply noted that beneficence is a virtue. Seneca is especially keen on beneficence, giving to it a sprawlingly long study (De Beneficiis) and the following praise \[B\]: "For what virtue do we venerate more? For which do we give more encouragement? Whom does this exhortation fit better than us who ratify the fellowship of the human race?"\footnote{Seneca, Ben I 15.2: Quam enim virtutem magis [viz., benignitate] veneramus? Cui magis stimulos addimus? Quibusve tam convenit haec adhortatio quam nobis societatem generis humani sancientibus? check Latin} We have nothing from Chrysippus comparable to Seneca's De Beneficiis. But Seneca apparently did. Seneca finds the time to belittle Chrysippus' discussion of the Graces, the allegorical figures of the favors one might do for another, and Seneca at least twice in De Beneficiis draws upon analogies he attributes to Chrysippus.\footnote{On the Graces, see Seneca, Ben I 8-9. Cf. Philodemus, De pietate (SVF 2.1081) for evidence that Chrysippus wrote a book On Graces. The other certain references are Ben II 17.3 and 25.3.} Moreover, Plutarch is clearly aware of virtue as happiness. Cf. the argument recorded by Alexander, de anima mant 166,21 Bruns, and the concise formulation of DL VII 89: "Happiness exists in virtue" (ἐν αὐτῇ τε εἶναι τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν). For Seneca, see citations.
Chrysippean writings on how to be beneficent toward ordinary people (Stoic rep 1038a). So there is no reason to doubt that Chrysippus subscribed to the reported Stoic doctrine that beneficence is a virtue.\(^\text{10}\)

Having motivated to some extent the desire to be beneficent, Chrysippus and Seneca need to give the second half of the story by saying why beneficence requires making other people better.\(^\text{11}\) Here is where things get complicated. On the one hand, the Stoic account of the good would seem to make bettering others the paradigm case of benefiting others. On the other hand, the Stoic account of the good would seem to make bettering others impossible.

To explain this puzzle and a possible response to it, I will slip into the mode of talking about "the Stoics" in order to draw on the general doxographies which surely represent views that both Chrysippus and Seneca accept.

The crux of the matter is that the Stoic account of goodness. The Stoics believe that what is good and what benefits are the same thing, and they believe that only virtue is good. The first of these doctrines is definitional. Our sources tell us that "the Stoics say that good is either the same as or not other than benefit."\(^\text{12}\) Given this definition of 'good', the Stoics insist that the only things that can be good are those that always benefit. Those things like strength and wealth that can be used well or badly and that thus can either benefit or harm are not in themselves good.\(^\text{13}\) Such a

---

\(^{10}\) The reported doctrine is that beneficence (χρηστότης) is, in particular, a specific kind of "justice," the only social virtue among the four primary virtues. For some kinds of "justice," see Stobaeus Π 60,10-11 and 60,22-24 Wachsmuth and compare the textually problematic DL VII 92-93.

\(^{11}\) I cannot here discuss the large question of why Chrysippus and Seneca believe that beneficence is a virtue, but I have discussed it elsewhere. See (citations deleted for anonymity).

\(^{12}\) DL VII 94, Sextus Μ XI 22. As Sextus explains, good is benefit in the strictest sense, and not other than benefit in the looser senses. There are three senses (Stobaeus Π 69,17-70,3 Wachsmuth; Sextus Μ XI 25-26; and the textually problematic DL VII 94): in the primary sense, good is that from which or by which (φοινικοῦ ἡφιστησιν) benefit results; the second sense is in accordance with which (καθ' ἠμφατον) benefiting results; and third is that "such as" (οἷον) to benefit.

\(^{13}\) Cf. Plutarch Stoic rep 1048c, Sextus Μ 11.61, Seneca Ep 120.3.
thing might count as "convenient" (εὐχρήστημα; commodum). But only virtue is always a source of benefit, and thus only virtue is good.14

This restrictive account of goodness begins to suggest how benefiting another would have to improve that other's character. In fact, we might now be tempted to say that since nothing other than virtue is beneficial, any attempt to benefit someone should focus on character and not on anything else. But a problem lurks. Because benefit is restricted to goods and goods are restricted to the virtuous, it follows that only the virtuous can benefit and be benefited. The Stoics are explicit about this: "They say that the worthless share in no good, since goodness is virtue or what shares in virtue, and the things associated with goods—whatever things are needed, since they are benefits—occur only for the excellent."15 Moreover, the Stoics believe that there are no degrees of virtue or vice. Either one is in harmony with the nature of the cosmos or one is not, and there are no degrees of being out of tune.16 Now we have our problem. If benefits can only be bestowed upon the virtuous and if the virtuous cannot be made better, then it cannot be true that benefiting others is a matter of making them better.

To escape this problem, we need to relax the strict conditions linking goodness, benefit, and virtue. First, we should recall the Stoic doctrine that virtuous actions are describable as identical to actions that we worthless folks can do. While I cannot beneficently give a needy person ten dollars, I can appropriately give a needy person ten dollars, and if I were virtuous, that

---

14 That is, only virtue is good in the first, strictest sense. Virtuous actions are good in the second and (thereby the) third senses; virtuous persons and collections of persons (e.g., a city properly so denominated) are good in the third sense. But because only virtue is good in all three senses, there is a point to the insistence that only virtue is good. For the connection among 'good', 'benefit', and 'virtue', consider also the definition of 'to benefit': "[The Stoics say] that to benefit is to move or sustain in accordance with virtue [ωφελείν δὲ ἐστὶ κινεῖν ἢ ἱσχεῖν κατ' ἀρετήν]" (DL VII 104).

15 Stobaeus II 7 101.5-9 Wachsmuth: Τῶν τε ἁγαθῶν μηδενός μετέχειν τοὺς φαύλους, ἐπειδὴ τὸ ἁγαθὸν ἀρετὴ ἐστὶν ἢ τὸ μετέχον ἀρετῆς· τά τε παρακείμενα τοῖς ἁγαθοῖς, ἀπερ ἐστίν ὧν χρή, ωφελήματα δύνατα, μόνοις τοῖς σπουδαίοις συμβαίνειν.

16 For this doctrine, see DL VII 127; Stobaeus II 7 113.18ff. Wachsmuth; Plutarch, Comm not 1063ab, and compare the related claim that the sage is just as happy as Zeus. The fact that Stoics conceive of full knowledge (knowledge as a system of kataleptic grasps and not merely as a kataleptic grasp) along coherentist lines helps to make these proclamations more intelligible: it is not crazy to insist that any set of beliefs that includes an inconsistency is incoherent.
same action would be beneficent. So my motivation to act as beneficence requires does not disappear just because I am not, at this moment, actually in a position to do something that strictly speaking counts as beneficent. To convey the relevance of beneficence to me, we might even set aside the strictures and be willing to talk as though I could do beneficent actions.

That Chrysippus and Seneca are aware of this problem and of this solution is, I think, perfectly clear. Seneca is explicit about relaxed standard for benefits in De Beneficiis, for example. He reminds us his discussion of beneficence is not limited to sages, but is intended to apply to more ordinary people who are making progress toward virtue. And Plutarch records that Chrysippus, too, was willing to talk as if non-goods were actually good, so long as we kept in mind that we were employing relaxed standards: Plutarch tells us that "Chrysippus writes in his work On Rhetoric that the sage will speak publicly and engage in politics as if wealth, reputation, and health were goods."\(^{18}\)

Yet as we allow our Stoics to talk about ordinary folks doing things that are in some sense beneficent, we should not lose sight of the reasons underlying the strict standard. The Stoics are right to insist that if I give you some money I may or may not be benefiting you. It depends upon whether it was appropriate for me to give you the money and on whether you are going to use the money well. If you use the money poorly, then my action was no benefit for you. Or if I give you the money at entirely the wrong time—if I interrupt a sacred moment with my hand outstretched, clutching the ten dollars I want you to have—then my action is no benefit for you. That is why the Stoics insist that if an action is to benefit another, both the giver and the receiver must be virtuous.

If the more relaxed approach to beneficence is going to respect this, the relaxed benefits still need to be tied to a strong character. Moreover, even in the relaxed discussion, the kind of quasi-benefit that helps another person's imperfect character improve should be recognized as far, far more.

\(^{17}\) See esp. Ben II 18.4, and cf., e.g., Ep 42.1: Do you know whom I now mean by 'good man'? I mean one like this, of the second rank. For the other sort is born, like the phoenix, perhaps only once in five hundred years.

\(^{18}\) Plutarch, Stoic rep 1034b: Χρύσιππος δέ πάλιν ἐν τῷ περὶ Ῥητορικῆς γράφων οὕτως ῥητορεύουσιν καὶ πολιτεύεσσαι τὸν οὐρανὸν ὡς καὶ τοῦ πλούτου ὄντος ἀγαθοῦ καὶ τῆς δόξης καὶ τῆς ὑγείας ὦμολογεῖ τοὺς λόγους αὐτῶν ἀνεξὸς εἶναι καὶ ἀπολιτεύτους καὶ τὰ δόγματα ταῖς χρείαις ἀνάρμοστα καὶ τοῖς πράξεις.
Advising the Cosmopolis — 9

valuable than some other kind of quasi-benefit. That is, the Stoics should agree that it is better to teach a person how to fish than it is to give the person fish, though of course the Stoics seek a more demanding, general kind of knowledge than that of fishing.

Again, it is tolerably clear that our Stoics do make this move, that they do elevate the relaxed beneficence of moral education above the relaxed beneficence of material resources. Only such a thought would explain Seneca's declaration that [C] "in benefits, I am necessarily defeated by Socrates, necessarily defeated by Diogenes, who marched naked through the middle of the Macedonians' treasures, treading upon the wealth of a king."\(^19\) The thought is also registered well in Cicero's account of Stoic ethics in De Finibus III [D]: "Moreover, we are impelled by nature to want to benefit as many people as we can, and especially by teaching with reasons and principles of wisdom."\(^20\) Finally, I suggest, this thought explains why Chrysippus recommends the political life [in (A)]. We should engage in politics not because it affords us the opportunity to spread material resources around, but because it allows us to "promote virtue and restrain vice."\(^21\)

\(^{19}\) Seneca, Ben V 4.3: Necesse est a Socrate beneficiis vicar, necesse est a Diogene, qui per medias Macedonum gazas nudus incessit calcatis regis opibus. This may surprise anyone who holds as Cooper and Procopé (186) do that De Beneficiis is "a work about acts of kindness by individuals to other individuals." This judgment is correct about the core relationship of beneficence traditionally understood and perhaps correct about Seneca's primary interests. But De Beneficiis moves toward a general theory of beneficence that allows for beneficia to be given very broadly and without expectation of return. The importance of advice might not be obvious on a first reading of Seneca's long, rambling treatise De Beneficiis (though it is interesting that Wright, "Form and Content in the Moral Essays," esp. 40, links Seneca's rambling structures with his desire to provide especially persuasive nuggets of advice). But it is definitely there, right from the start, when Seneca advises (!) Aebutius to "help [adiuva] one person with money [pec], another with credit [fide], another with influence [gratia], another with advice [consilio], another with healthy præcepta" (Ben 2.4). Furthermore, Seneca's elaborate classification of benefits (Ben I 11.1-5) also holds a place for advice. Seneca classifies libertas, pudicitia, and mens bona as necessaries "without which we ought not live" (Ben I 11.2,4), in contrast to what is necessary for living, what is necessary because we are not willing to live without it (such as our family and our household gods), what is merely useful (in the way that money and public office [honor] is), and what is pleasurable; presumably, advice is the vehicle for providing the beneficia of libertas, pudicitia, and mens bona. Throughout the rest of De Beneficiis, Seneca occasionally reminds us that advice is an important kind of benefit (e.g., Ben III 9.2).

\(^{20}\) Cicero, Fin III 65: Impellimur autem natura ut prodesse velimus quam plurimis in primisque docendo rationibusque prudentiae tradendis.

\(^{21}\) As I explain in detail elsewhere ("Stoic Rules"), the Stoics use the formula 'the sage will φ' to say that φ-ing is an appropriate type of action for all human beings, i.e., a type of action which is generally in accordance with nature, a καθήκον. If we put this together with Diogenes' report, we will not be surprised to learn from Stobaeus (II 7 86,3) that the Stoics consider serving on embassies (προσβέστειον) to be an appropriate action.
Thus far, I have tried to show that the Stoic goal of politics is to help people become better, and that this goal is the highest aim of beneficence, a required virtue. Our next step is to determine more precisely how we can help people become better. Seneca's reference to Diogenes marching naked over treasures gives some clue to one way of helping others: we can set a memorable example for them. Cicero's mention of "teaching by reasons and principles of wisdom" suggests a less colorful way of doing the trick. The Stoics evidently gave considerable attention to the question of how one can help others progress toward virtue, for they introduced a branch of philosophy which is explicitly concerned with this question, called praeceptiva or παραινετική. Unfortunately, most of the work in this branch of philosophy is lost to us now, and we need to rely quite heavily on two of Seneca's longer letters to Lucilius (94 and 95). These letters reveal at least four ways in which a person can help to make another better, which I would like to identify. Then I shall argue that both Seneca and Chrysippus make room for these four ways in their discussions of politics.

In brief, then, the four ways are these. First, we can offer general principles (decreta, δόγματα, Ep 95.10) of value and explain their inferential connections to other general principles of value and truths (Ep 95.61; cf. 94.27). These principles announce, for example, what sort of thing virtue is, or why externals are indifferent to our happiness. This method of helping others is only likely to be helpful to someone who has already made significant progress. Second, we can endorse particular kinds of actions in the form of particular rules or proverbial reminders, both of

22 Seneca, Ep 95.1. Cf. Sextus, M VII 12. If DL VII 84 includes the parainetic branch in ethics by the phrase περὶ τῶν καθηκόντων προτροπῶν τε καὶ ἀποτροπῶν, then we can safely attribute it to Chrysippus.

23 Sometimes Seneca suggests a different taxonomy of advice, based on general styles and aims. In this vein, he suggests that monitio is a general category which includes consolatio, dissuasio, adhortatio, obiurgatio, and laudatio (Ep 94.39; cf. Ep 94.25), and he notes that Posidonius classifies praeceptio as a style of advising on a par with suasio, consolatio, and exhortatio (Ep 95.65). But I am more interested in the distinction in Epistulae 94-95 that cuts across these kinds of advice and differentiates pieces of advice by the inferential and evidentiary content.
which get called precepts (praecepta). These precepts are more closely attached to action in particular kinds of circumstances than to universal truths (Ep 94.35), and they depend upon the general principles as conclusions of practical reasoning depend upon general premises concerning value (Ep 95.12; cf. Ep 94.31). Precepts are useful in providing more concrete advice and in painting a general picture of what sorts of things one should be doing. Besides offering principles and precepts, we can also set an example for others to follow. The Stoics are especially attentive to the importance of imitation in moral education.

The fourth way of helping another to progress toward virtue is crucial. To make moral progress, we need more than the first three kinds of advice. The problem is not just that anyone looking to make moral progress must get beyond reading and memorizing others' thoughts in order to reach the point where he is thinking through the reasons for himself. Progress requires increasing sensitivity to the demands of the particular situation, and the three general kinds of advice cannot speak directly to any particular situation. Seneca reminds his correspondent Lucilius of how a "large part of advice" has to be tailored to a specific situation in order to be helpful:

[E] Constantly you consult me concerning particular matters, forgetting that we are separated by a vast sea. Since a large part of advice [consilium] depends on its timeliness, it necessarily happens that my opinion on certain matters will reach you at a time when the contrary opinion is better. For advice fits circumstances. Our circumstances are carried along, or even rushed. Thus, advice should be born on the spot...

24 Seneca's examples of praecepta are either rules of the form 'One should (not) ϕ in such-and-such a way (in such-and-such circumstances, possessing such-and-such role [persona])' or proverbs like 'Be thrifty with time'. In Ep 94, see sections 5, 8, 11, 22, 27, 43.

25 See especially Ep 33, 80.1, 84, 108.

26 Seneca, Ep 71.1: Subinde me de rebus singulis consulis oblitus vasto nos mari dividit. Cum magna pars consilii sit in tempore, necesse est evenire, ut de quibusdam rebus tune ad te perferatur sententia mea, cum iam contraria potior est. Consilia enim rebus aptantur. Res nostrae feruntur, immo volvuntur. Ergo consilium nasci sub diem debetur... It might be thought that Seneca is simply saying that the advice must be able to reach Lucilius in time, and that the distance between them is making all advice tardy. This cannot be right, however. First, it makes Lucilius out to be an idiot, who repeatedly fails to realize that the overseas post does not work instantaneously. Second, it
This kind of advice, clearly enough, can only be given to those few persons whose characters and situations one knows well.

Having extracted from Seneca's discussion in Letters 94 and 95 four kinds of advice—four ways of helping others to become better agents—I now wish to show that both Seneca and Chrysippus are sensitive to these four kinds of advising as means of doing politics. I will start not with the general principles but with the more specific precepts. One crucial way in which the political life issues precepts is through legislation. Seneca's discussion of the usefulness of precepts includes a discussion on the usefulness of laws on the grounds that laws are just a kind of precept, mixed with threats.27 For Chrysippus, the evidence is less explicit, but not impossible to come by. Consider the following important passage concerning Stoic ethics in Stobaeus' Anthology:

[F] It follows on these points that the sage engages in politics, especially in the sorts of polities which manifest some progress toward being perfect polities, and that he gives laws and educates people, and further, that it is appropriate for excellent people to write things which are capable of benefiting those who encounter their words...28

misses the more general emphasis on situational appropriateness which is echoed in other passages of the Letters (e.g., Ep 22.1-2 and Ep 64.8). Seneca's discussion of praecepta emphasizes again and again the importance of having an guide (e.g., sections 40, 50, 52, 55, 69-72 of Ep 94).

27 Ep 94.37. Seneca's argument comes as a response to an Aristonian objector, who insists that because laws are rules and laws are useless for moral education, rules are useless: "He [sc. the objector] says, 'Laws do not make us do what we ought to do, and what else are they besides rules mixed with threats?'' ("Leges," inquit, "ut faciamus quod oportet non efficiunt, et quid aliud sunt quam minis mixta praecepta?"). Seneca responds at first by distinguishing laws qua threatening commands, which are useless, and rules, which are useful: "First of all, laws do not persuade just because they threaten, and praecepta do not force, but encourage. Second, laws frighten one from crime, praecepta urge one to appropriate action" (Primum omnium ob hoc illae non persuasit, at haec non cogunt, sed exorant; deinde leges a scelere deterrent, praecepta in officium adhortantur). But then Seneca adds a further point, that some laws are not merely commands, but are in fact useful, educative rules: "Add to these the fact that laws are also beneficial for good conduct, at least if they not only command, but teach" (His adice quod leges quoque proficiunt ad bonos mores, utique si non tantum imperant sed docent).

28 Stobaeus II 7, 94,7-20: ἐπὶ ομονοιὸν δὲ τοῦτοις ὑπαρχεῖν καὶ τὸ πολιτεύσθαι τὸν οὐρὸν καὶ μάλιστ' ἐν ταῖς τοιαύταις πολιτείαις ταῖς ἐκφρασακοίς τινα προκοπήν πρὸς τὰς τελείας πολιτείας καὶ τὸ νομοθετεῖν δὲ καὶ τὸ παιδεύειν ἀνθρώπους, ἔτι δὲ συγγράφειν τὰ δυνάμενα ὥσελεῖν τοὺς ἑπταγχάνοντας τοῖς γράμμασιν οἰκεῖον εἶναι τοῖς σπουδαίοις καὶ τὸ συγκαταβαίνειν καὶ εἰς γάμον καὶ εἰς τεκνογονίαν καὶ αὐτῶν χάριν καὶ τῆς πατρίδος καὶ ὑπομένειν περὶ τούτης, ἐὰν ᾦ μετρία, καὶ πόνους καὶ θάνατον. My translation leaves off the last clause as its relation to Chrysippean doctrine is less clear.
A comparison of this passage with two similar ones in Stobaeus' Anthology and with independent evidence citing Chrysippus' On Lives leaves the Chrysipean provenance of this report quite secure. We can take this as a record of what Chrysippus' On Lives said. But what are we told about Chrysippus' view? We have an explanation of how the political life and the philosophical life can benefit people: the former educates and gives laws, whereas the latter writes beneficial books. All that I want to suggest is that the political life's law-giving is introduced in part to explain more precisely how the political life educates. Chrysippus' On Lives would have said that the goal of politics—promoting virtue and restraining vice—is served by law-giving.

It is quite plausible to suppose that laws function as precepts, and thus that politics by laws can effect moral education as if by precepts. But we might have thought that general principles and inferential connections among them are the special province of the philosopher and the philosophical style of moral education. But we would have been wrong. Consider the following passage in Seneca's discussion of laws as precepts:

[Gen] On this matter I disagree with Posidonius [a Stoic of c. 135-c. 50 BCE], who says, "I do not think that preambles should have been added by Plato's Laws. For a law should be brief, so that it may more easily be grasped by the ignorant. It should be like a divine voice sent down; it should command, not discuss. Nothing seems to me more cold, nothing more unfitting, than a law with a preamble. Warn me, tell me what you want me to do; I am not learning, but obeying." But they are beneficial, and thus you will see that states which have bad laws have bad conduct.

Posidonius firmly rejects the idea that laws should have preambles because he believes that laws should be mere commands. But Seneca is clear that preambles are valuable. An account of why the law is promulgated, of the principles related to the law, help to make the law beneficial.

29 The link is even tighter if we follow Heeren and emend from καί τὸ νομοθετεῖν καὶ τὸ παιδεύειν ἀνθρώπους to καί τὸ νομοθετεῖν τε καὶ τὸ παιδεύειν ἀνθρώπως.

30 Seneca, Ep. 94.38: In hac re dissentio a Posidonio, qui "inprobo," inquit, "quod Platonis legibus adiecta principia sunt. Legem enim brevem esse oportet, quo facilius ab imperitis teneatur. Velut emissa divinitus vox sit; iubeat, on disputet. Nihil videtur mihi frigidius, nihil ineptius quam lex cum prologo. Mone, dic quid me velis
Hence, the political life concern for laws as educative tools should extend to a concern for general principles as educative tools.

Only speculation can link this account of the role of general principles to Chrysippus' account of the political life. We might note that Stoics of Chrysippus' time were deeply interested in Plato's *Laws*. (One of them, Persaeus, wrote a work in seven books *In Reply to Plato's Laws* (DL VII 36).) And we might suppose that Posidonius was breaking with earlier Stoics, including Persaeus and Chrysippus, on this issue as he broke with them on many other issues.

However that may be, general principles can find their way into the toolbox of the Chrysippean politician in a second way, which we can see if we skip ahead to consider the role of close, personal advice in the political life. There is no doubt that both Chrysippus and Seneca endorse the importance of this kind of education, for they envision as a principal kind of political engagement the life of the political advisor. Here consider a pair of reports for what Chrysippus recommends in his *On Lives*, the first from Plutarch and the second from Stobaeus:

feccisse: non disco sed pareo." Proficiunt vero; itaque malis moribus uti videbis civitates usas malis legibus.

31 There is in addition to this the role of close, personal, erotically charged education in Chrysippus' picture of the ideal polis. The crucial evidence is DL VII 129: "They also say that the sage will love the young who manifest by their appearance a natural endowment for virtue, as Zeno says in his *Republic*, and Chrysippus says in the first book of *On Lives and Apollodorus in his Ethics* (και ἔρασθησεσθαι δὲ τῶν σοφῶν τῶν νέων τῶν ἐκμαίνοντων διὰ τοῦ εἴδους τὴν πρὸς ἅρετην εὐφυίαν. ὡς φησίν Ζήνων ἐν τῇ Πολιτείᾳ καὶ Χρύσιππος ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ Περί Βίων καὶ Ἀπολλόδωρος ἐν τῇ "θηκῇ"). Malcolm Schofield (*The Stoic Idea of the City* [Cambridge, 1991], chp. 2) has explained how this love is aimed at turning the young toward developing their natural endowment for virtue. The explanation rests primarily on Stoic definitions related to love. First, the Stoic definition of the science of love: "It is the science of the chase after youths of good nature, being for turning them toward living in accordance with virtue, and in general it is the science of loving honorably. That is why they also say that the one who has intelligence will be a lover" (Stobaeus II 7 66,6-9 Wachsmuth: τὴν δ' ἐπιστήμην νέων θήρας εὐφυίαν. πρὸς τρέψιν οὖσαν ἐπὶ τὸν θῆν κατ' ἅρετην. διὸ καὶ φασίν ἔρασθησεσθαι τῶν νοῦν ἔχοντα). For further evidence of love's protreptic function in Stoicism, see Athenaeus SVF 1.247. For other evidence that the Stoics thought the sage would be a lover, see Stobaeus II 7 115,2-4 Wachsmuth; Cicero *Fin* III 68, Cicero *Tusc* IV 72, Stobaeus SVF 3.720. (Note that the sage's love must be distinguished from the passion love, even though the sage's love is defined in terms of the same apparent actions as the passion love (Stobaeus II 7 91,5-6 Wachsmuth, and DL VII 113). The distinction between the sage's love and the passion love is not in outward behavior, but in inward attitude, for the sage proceeds from knowledge and without passion.) So the sage pursues the youth whose beauty is the potential to be virtuous, and the sage tries to turn the youth from potential to actual virtue. If the sage should succeed in turning his beloved toward virtue, then they will enjoy the true friendship that only two sages can enjoy. (See, e.g., Stobaeus II 7 108,5ff. Wachsmuth, DL VII 33, DL VII 124, Cicero *Nat* DI 121, Clement SVF 1.223.) Accordingly, a standard Stoic definition of 'love' identifies friendship as the goal of love: "They say that love is an attempt to make friends on account of a manifestation of beauty, and it is thus not for sexual intercourse, but for friendship" (DL VII 129: εἶναι δὲ τὸν ἔρωτα ἐπισκόπην φιλοποιίας διὰ κάλλος ἐκμαίνομενον· καὶ μὴ εἶναι
[H] That he [sc. the sage] does these things for the sake of trade and money, he [sc. Chrysippus] has also made clear earlier [sc. in Book One of On Lives (cf. Stoic rep 1043bcd)] by positing three ways of making money which agree especially well with the sage: from kingship, from friends, and third, after these, from lecturing.32

[I] [They say] that there are three principal lives, the kingly, the political, and third, the life concerned with knowledge. Similarly, there are also three principal ways of making money: from kingship, by which [the sage] will either be king or will thrive on kingly funds; second, from government, for he will engage in politics in accordance with guiding reason, for he will also marry and produce children, for these things accord with the nature of a rational animal, fit for community and loving others. Thus, he will make money both from government and from friends who are in authority. And concerning giving lectures and making money from giving lectures... they are agreed on making money from people for education and on occasionally taking fees from those who love learning.33
The second kind of life can sound faintly ridiculous: the sage is supposed to sponge off of his friends? Critics were quick to lampoon the proposal. But in fact the critics are either missing the point or acting in bad faith, for these "friends" are not the sage's, but the king's. The word 'friends [φίλοι]' was commonly used in Chrysippus' time of the advisors in Hellenistic courts. So Chrysippus is recognizing the possibility of being a political advisor twice over: one might advise the king himself, or one might advise the advisors to the king. That Seneca, too, recognizes the possibility of advising as a political life needs less attention. Seneca's own life as a tutor to Nero and his production of advisory texts like De Clementia confirm Seneca's commitment to the possibility of engaging in politics as a close personal advisor.

Once personal advising of those in political power is seen as a way of helping to promote virtue and restrain vice, it should not be hard to suppose that such advising deals both in concrete, situational counsel about what should be done here and now and in general principles that can illuminate deliberations about what should be done. Because the actual advisor would use multiple kinds of advice, it is reasonable to suppose that both Chrysippus and Seneca recognize the importance of multiple kinds of advice in politics.

Through being an advisor, one can influence law and its enforcement, which we have already seen to be a tool of moral education. But one can also influence a prominent person's obsession, see Schofield, The Stoic Idea of the City, 119-127.

34 In addition to Plutarch (in [H]), see the anonymous criticisms reported in DL VII 189: "Further, the ways of making a living are ridiculous, for example, from a king, for one will need to yield to him. And the one from friendship, for friendship will be for sale at a gain. And the one from wisdom, for wisdom will be mercenary. And these are the charges." (καίτοι τίνος χάριν ποριστέον αὐτῷ: εἰ μὲν γὰρ τοῦ ζήν ἐνεκεν, ἀδιάφορον τὸ ζήν· εἰ δὲ ἠδονῆς, καὶ αὐτῇ ἀδιάφορος· εἰ δὲ τῆς ἀρετῆς, αὐτάρκης αὐτῇ πρὸς εὐδαιμονίαν. καταγέλαστοι δὲ και οἱ τρόποι τοῦ πορισμοῦ, οὐοι οἱ ἀπὸ βασιλέως· ἐκεῖν γὰρ αὐτῷ δεῇσε. καὶ οἱ ἀπὸ σοφίας· λήμματος γὰρ ὄνως ἡ φιλία έσται. καὶ οἱ ἀπὸ σοφίας· μισθαρνήσει γάρ ἡ σοφία. καὶ ταύτα μὲν ἑγέκαλείται.) Note that Hicks, in the Loeb edition, gets DL VII 188-189 quite wrong by attributing everything but the last sentence to Chrysippus himself, instead of to a skeptical critic. See Schofield, The Stoic Idea of the City, chp. 1.

35 See Musti and Walbank in CAH2, 7.1: 179 and 69-70. See also Konstan, Friendship in the Classical World, 93-108.

36 Some helpful discussion of the historical role of philosophers as advisors to politicians in Rome is provided by Griffin, "Philosophy, Poltica, and Politicians at Rome," and Rawson, "Roman Rulers and the Philosophic Adviser."
behavior, and thus shape an example that others will imitate. For the Stoics recommend the political life in part because of its power to improve people by giving them a model. The importance of such models is pervasively noted in the work of Roman Stoics like Seneca, but it would be wrong to suggest that this Roman obsession is foreign to the earliest Stoics. In the third century BCE, philosophers and political rulers were sometimes cultishly admired as models, and the emphatic favor that Chrysippus shows for advising political rulers cannot be fully understood without this background.

To sum up the second step of the Stoic response to Plutarch: there are four ways of helping others to make progress that find expression in Chrysippus' and Seneca's discussions of what politics does. This further supports the claim that politics is supposed to help others.

It also leads to the third step of the response. For these various politically engaged ways of helping become better cannot help all people at once. I do not know of any evidence that any Stoic made this claim in quite so many words. But I believe that there are good reasons to attribute the claim to our Stoics and good reasons for our Stoics to make the claim. The crucial points are two.

The first point is that politically engaged help for other people would reach all people in just about the same way if there were a world-state, and the Stoics do not endorse the idea of a world-state.

It has been thought that Stoic cosmopolitanism is a political cosmopolitanism, a desire for a world-state, but this thought is usually predicated on a misinterpretation of a misleading passage in

---

37 As does Sedley, "The Stoic-Platonist Debate," especially 150. But Sedley's point is about the role of exempla in the ethical theorizing, whereas I am here emphasizing the importance of models in ethical practice. Even if some Stoics sought a set of coherent principles without appeal to messy examples, still they might have recognized that anyone (even a sage) could benefit from advice and dialogue in working through more particular commitments in the world.

38 On "ruler cults" in the Hellenistic world, see, e.g., Green, From Alexander to Actium. The cult of philosophers is clearest in Epicurus' Garden, but not entirely unparalleled, given the widespread prominence of stories about Socrates, Diogenes, Pyrrho, etc.
Plutarch's work On the Fortune or Virtue of Alexander. Plutarch is discussing the Republic of Zeno of Citium, the founder of Stoicism:

And the much admired Republic of Zeno, the founder of the Stoic school, strains to this one main point, in order that we should not live as cities and tribes each defining what is just individually, but that we should think that all human beings are fellow tribesmen and fellow citizens and that there should be one way of life and one cosmos or order, just as a herd grazes together, nurtured by a common law or pasturing. Zeno wrote this just as if he were imprinting again a dream or image of a philosopher's good order and republic, but it was Alexander who brought the theory to effect.39

Plutarch is engaged in a debate that was not uncommon in his day, a debate about whether Alexander the Great's success was due to his greatness or to luck. Plutarch believes that Alexander really was great, and that among other things, Alexander made real the merely theoretical promise of cosmopolitanism. But if Alexander made it real, then the theoretical promise was for something like a world-state. So Plutarch would seem to be saying that Zeno's Republic favors a world-state.

But in fact, Plutarch is misrepresenting Zeno's Republic. Other evidence makes it clear that Zeno's idea for an ideal city is for one city among others, and not for one super-sized city. According to Diogenes Laertius' crucial report [K], for example, "Zeno laid it down... that neither temples nor law-courts nor gymnasia should be built in cities [plural!]" and "concerning coinage he writes this: 'It must not be thought that coinage should be introduced either for purposes of exchange or for travelling abroad.'"40 These reports are nonsense if Zeno advocated a world-state.

---

39 Plutarch SVF 1.262: καί μήν ἡ πολὺ θαυμαζομένη πολιτεία τοῦ τήν Στωικών αἱρεσίαν καταβαλομένου Ζήνωνος εἰς ἐν τούτῳ συντείνει κεφάλαιον, ἵνα μή κατὰ πόλεις μηδέ κατὰ δήμους οἰκώμεν. ίδιος ἐκαστοι διωρισμένοι δικαίοις, ἀλλὰ πάντας ἀνθρώπους ἡγώμεθα δημότας καὶ πολίτας. εἰς δὲ βίος δὲ κόσμος, ὡσπερ ἄγεις συννόμου νόμων κοινὸς συντρεφομένης. τούτῳ Ζήνων μὲν ἔγραψεν ὃσπερ άνατυπω σάμενος...

40 DL VII 33: [viz., Ζήνωνα] δογματίζειν... μήτε ιερὰ μήτε δικαστήρια μήτε γυμνάσια ἐν ταῖς πόλεισιν οἰκοδομεῖσθαι. Περὶ τοῦ νομίσματος οὔτω γράφειν: ἱδία δὲ οὔτε ἀλλαγής ένεκεν οἰεσθαί δεῖν κατασκευάζειν οὔτε ἀποδημίας ένεκεν.
We can only speculate about why the Stoics do not endorse the idea of the world state. Perhaps they thought that the work of politics—helping to make people better—fails to work as well over large distances. But whatever the reasons, there is a second point to make in the service of the claim that the political work of helping others is of limited efficacy.

Only some people can optimally help others by engaging in politics. This is so for two reasons. First, some of us do not have the opportunity to be king or advisor to a king, or to have political power in some other way. Those of us to whom the political life is not available will have to find other ways of being beneficent, of helping others. Second, some of us might be able to help people better by avoiding political office and by engaging in the kinds of moral education outside of the institutions of politics. Seneca considers the Stoics Zeno, Cleanthes, and Chrysippus to have been in this second camp:

[L.] We, at least, say that both Zeno and Chrysippus did greater things than if they had led armies, held offices, made laws. The laws they made were not for one state but for the entire human race. Why, therefore, should it not befit the good man to have such leisure, by means of which he may govern future ages and publicly address not just a few people but all people of all nations who are and will be?41

Hence, while it may seem that Zeno, Cleanthes, and Chrysippus lived contrary to their teaching, they in fact "found a way for their retirement [quies] to benefit people more than the running and sweating of others" (Otio 6.5). Teaching and writing, Seneca says, can serve as the deeds of otium that benefit far more people than traditional political action can.42

41 Otio 6.4: Nos certe sumus qui dicimus et Zennonem et Chrysippum maiora egisse quam si duxissent exercitus, gessissent honores, leges tulissent; quas non uni civitati, sed toli humano generi tulerunt. Quid est ergo quare tale otium non conveniat viro bono, per quod futura saecula ordinetur nec apud paucos contionetur sed apud omnis omnium gentium homines, quique sunt quiesque erunt?

42 See also Tranq 3.3, Ep 14.14, 38.1, 64.9, 89.13. Interestingly, in De Otio, Seneca praises otium for its potential to deliver all three kinds of advice that are not personal and situationally specific: (1) decreta in the second argument (Otio 4.2); (2) laws=praeccepta in the third argument (Otio 6.4, with Ep 94.37); (3) models, covertly, in the first argument (Otio 3.5; cf. Otio 1.1).
At this point, as a consequence of the second general sort of limitation on the efficacy of political beneficence, we have an answer to one of Plutarch's criticisms. It turns out that some people can meet the goal of politics better by staying out of politics, and so it is consistent to endorse the political life in general while excusing some people from engagement.

4.

To answer Plutarch's other criticism, we have to return to the first of the general limitations on the efficacy of political engagement. Because it is impossible for anyone to help all people in just the same way through politics, we must make a choice about which people to benefit. Helping some subset of people is the best we can do. Hence, it is possible to hold that helping some subset of people optimally instantiates rather than frustrates the desire to help people in general.

Given this limitation on political efficacy, the difference between the cosmopolitan's attention to the question of whom we should benefit and the anti-cosmopolitan's attention to this question will turn on the consideration given to the possibility of helping foreigners instead of compatriots. Neither the cosmopolitan nor the anti-cosmopolitan seeks to help all citizens of the cosmos. That is impossible. But the cosmopolitan considers how she can best help her fellow cosmopolites by actively considering the possibility of more optimally benefiting people abroad, whereas the anti-cosmopolitan does not. The anti-cosmopolitan remains tied to benefiting these people rather than those; the cosmopolitan at least considers moving elsewhere.43

Both Chrysippus and Seneca are quite explicit in taking the cosmopolitan line that anyone considering the political life should consider the political life abroad. First, consider more of the

43 This broad contrast paper over other possibilities. For example: one might consider benefiting abroad without thinking that one owes anything to one's compatriots, or one might consider benefiting abroad while believing that one owes something to one's compatriots. Elsewhere I have called it the distinction between strict cosmopolitanism and moderate cosmopolitanism, and I have argued that Chrysippus maintains the former while Seneca plumps for the latter. But the difference depends on who has what claim to be one's beneficiaries, and thus turns on a longer inquiry into the virtue of beneficence (see note 11 above). Here I am content to exploit the area of agreement between Chrysippus and Seneca. (citations deleted for anonymity)
evidence for Chrysippus' *On Lives*, the work in which he endorses the life of politics. Again Plutarch is our source:

[M] But Chrysippus himself in the first book of *On Lives* says that the sage will voluntarily assume kingship and make money from it, and if he is not able to be king, he will live with a king and will serve a king, a king like Idanthyrsus the Scythian or Leucon the Pontian... "For," he says, "while holding to these things [viz., common conceptions? cf. Sextus, M XI 22] let us again examine the fact that he will serve and live with princes, since we have maintained this too for reasons much like the very considerations which have caused some not even to suspect it." And after a little: "And not only with those who have made some progress by being engaged in disciplinary activities and certain habits, for example at the courts of Leucon and Idanthyrsos."44

Chrysippus' examples are telling. Chrysippus, himself from Soli in Cilicia (southern Asia minor), was writing in Athens and recommending political engagement as far away as the Crimea or Scythia.45 These places might have seemed like the end of the earth, as they were surely at the outer reaches of the Greek world (οἰκουμένη), and filled with non-Greek speakers.

Seneca makes a similar maneuver when he is advising Serenus to stay active in *De Tranquillitate Animi*:

44 Plutarch, *Stoic rep* 1043b-d: ἀλλ' αὐτὸς ὁ Χρύσιππος ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ μιᾷ βασιλείαν τε τὸν σοφὸν ἐκουσίῳς ἀναδεξεῖται λέγει χρηματιζόμενον αὐτῆς· καί αὐτὸς βασιλεύειν μὴ δύνηται, συμβιώσεται βασιλείς καὶ στρατεύσεται μετὰ βασιλέως, ὁδ' ἔν Ίδανθυρσος ὁ Σκύθης ἡ Λεύκων ὁ Ποντικός... "ὅτι γὰρ" φησι "καὶ στρατεύσεται μετὰ δυναστῶν καὶ βιώσεται, πάλιν ἐπισκεψόμεθα τούτων ἐχόμενοι. τινῶν μὲν οὕδε ταύτα ὑπονοοῦντων διὰ τοὺς ὁμοίους ὑπολογισμοὺς ἡμῶν δὲ καὶ ταύτ' ἀπολιπόντων διὰ τοὺς παραπλησίους λόγους." καί μετὰ μικρὸν "οὐ μόνον δὲ μετὰ τῶν προσκεκοφώτων ἐπὶ ποιεῖ καὶ ἐν ἀγωγιᾷ καὶ ἐν ἔθει ποιεῖς γεγονότων, ὅσον παρὰ Λεύκων καὶ Ἐδανθύρσου." Stobaeus II 111.3-5 Wachsmuth also records that "the sage will be king sometimes and will live with a king who manifests both a good nature and a love of learning" (καὶ βασιλεύσειν τὸ ποτὲ τὸν νοῦν ἔχοντα καὶ βασιλείς συμβιώσεθαι καὶ εὐφυίαν ἐμφαίνοντι καὶ φιλομάθειαν).

45 Leucon (389/8-349/8) was a member of the Spartocid dynasty which ruled at Panticapaeum, in the Crimea, on the west side of the Cimmerian Bosporus, which connected the Black Sea with the Sea of Azor (OCD s.v. 'Spartocids'). Idanthyrsus was a Scythian ruler, and 'Scythian' was applied to various Asian tribes, especially to those who lived in the region between the Carpathians and the river Don (OCD s.v. 'Scythia'). Plutarch also makes reference to this passage from *On Lives* more obliquely at *Comm not* 1061d, and Strabo SVF 3.692 also records the fact that Chrysippus discussed Leucon.
By our magnanimity we have not shut ourselves within the walls of one city, but instead have gone forth for interaction with the whole earth and have proclaimed that the world is our patria just in order that we might give a wider field to our virtue. Is the tribunal closed to you, and are you barred from the rostrum and the assembly? Look how many broad regions lie open behind you, how many peoples; never can you be blocked from a part so large that a still larger part will not be left to you. So it is that Chrysippus and Seneca can consistently say that beneficence is owed to human beings as such and that we are all fellow-citizens in the cosmopolis while also allowing that a good human being can engage in politics in such a way that some people are benefited more than others. We cannot help all people equally, and we can consider which set of people to benefit as the optimal way of helping people generally.

Conclusions

At this point, Plutarch's criticisms are disarmed. The commitment to cosmopolitanism does not make engaging in local politics inconsistent, and the commitment to politics does not make an avoidance of political engagement inconsistent. Now I want to extract two lessons from this account, one for contemporary observers of Stoicism and the other for contemporary theorists of cosmopolitanism.

First, those who consider Stoicism apolitical should perhaps reconsider the Stoic endorsement of the political life. It is true that the Stoics do not show an immense amount of attention to the shape a regime ought to take, nor to the distribution of resources, the maintenance of physical security, or the provision of criminal justice. But that is because they think that these

---

46 Seneca, Trag 4.4: Ideo magno animo nos non unius urbis moenibus clusimus sed in totius urbis commercium emisimus patriamque nobis mundum professi sumus, ut liceret latiorem virtutis campum dare. Praeclusum tibi tribunal est et rostris prohiberis aut comitiis: respice post te quantum latissimaram regionum pateat, quantum populorum; numquam ita tibi magna pars obstructur ut non maior reliquatur.
specialized questions are relatively unimportant and that good answers to these specialized questions will depend closely on the details of the particular circumstances. The function of politics still very much matters to the Stoics. If we do not give up on this fact, we might turn the tables on those who call the Stoics apolitical. The Stoics seem apolitical by our lights. But of course, by their lights, it is we who are apolitical. For we show almost no attention whatsoever to the actual point of politics, as the Stoics see it: we do not aim to make people better.47

Moreover, if we keep in mind the Stoics' commitment to politics on their own terms, we can more fully appreciate the fundamental importance of advice and moral education to their ethics. The choice between the preferred lives of politics and philosophy is made at least in part in terms of how we can help others become better. The process of helping others become better, the process of advising in multiple ways, is central. Many have seen that modern moral philosophers are all too quick to think of morality as a solitary enterprise, failing to see that getting things right is an on-going process shared with others who offer advice and models. But it is rarely noted that the Stoics do not make this mistake. For them, making progress toward getting things right in practice is most definitely a shared enterprise; it is, quite simply, a political enterprise.

Second, those who consider cosmopolitanism inconsistent with local service should reflect more closely on the Stoic model of politics, as well. If we can agree that we should help other people live better lives, then we face the question, Which others? Now, we could say that we should help everyone somehow, but draw distinctions among our beneficiaries in order to differentiate the ways in which we should help them. This response is very familiar from the traditional idea of rendering unto Caesar what is Caesar's and rendering unto God what is God's (Matthew 22:21). But this initial distinction just forestalls our question.48 For any given kind of benefit that we bestow, we can repeat our question: to whom should we give that kind of benefit?

47 On this score, the Stoics are right in line with Plato and Aristotle, contra Reesor's claim to the contrary (The Political Theory of the Old and Middle Stoa, 59).

48 Moreover, it is not an easy distinction to make, as Anscombe realizes ("On the Source of the Authority of the State," 132): "It is indeed one of the troubles about government, that it is difficult to specify the 'things that are Caesar's'."

Now the cosmopolitan challenge becomes clear. Our Stoics insist that the most important sort of benefit—the serious work of helping others to live better lives—should not be arbitrarily limited to just one set of human beings, but should be thoughtfully bestowed in an optimal fashion.

We are free, of course, to insist on a different conception of the good than the Stoics', so as to conceive of helping others to live better lives in a more material way. We are also free to decide that helping others to live better lives is only in a limited fashion proper to politics, which should stay out of the way. But still the Stoic challenge remains. If we are going to concentrate our efforts to help compatriots with our political action, our charitable contributions, and our ongoing concern, and if we are not going to consider how we might have helped human beings better by locating or distributing our efforts differently, then we need principled reasons for thinking that compatriots deserve our benefits more. We cannot assume that cosmopolitanism is not an option for locally engaged people.49

Sources Cited


CAH2 = The Cambridge Ancient History, 2nd ed.


49 acknowledgments deleted for anonymity


