STOIC CONCEPTIONS OF FREEDOM
AND THEIR RELATION TO ETHICS *

SUSANNE BOBZIEN

1. INTRODUCTION

In modern discussions of freedom in Stoic philosophy we often encounter the following assumptions: (i) the Stoics discussed the problem of free will and determinism;[1] (ii) since in Stoic philosophy freedom of the will is in the end nothing but an illusion, the Stoics understood the freedom of the sage as a substitute for it, and as the only true freedom;[2] (iii) in the five hundred years or so of live Stoic philosophical debates, the Stoics were by and large concerned with the same philosophical problems of freedom. In the following pages I argue that (i) can be upheld only in a rather restricted way, that (ii) is altogether untenable, and that although there may have occurred little change in the Stoic philosophical position on freedom and related concepts over the centuries, we can detect more than one transformation of the philosophical problems that were at the forefront of the discussion. All the conceptions and problems of freedom were linked in one way or other to Stoic ethics; and the differences between them become particularly transparent when one considers their various roles in this context.

I shall be concerned with three different stages in Stoic philosophy, each time looking at how the Stoics of that period deal with freedom and affiliated concepts, and how they relate to ethics. These stages are firstly, the early Stoics, in particular Chrysippus; then, Epictetus; and finally, some later Stoics, presumably of the second century. I shall not discuss the question of the development from one stage to the next. I shall simply show that the stages differ noticeably from one another, and how they differ. Each stage faced a philosophical problem of freedom (or even several); and these problems – although partly related – were not the same. In the first stage, for instance, the topic of the freedom of the sage and that of the kind of freedom which is a necessary condition for moral responsibility were totally unrelated. And – contrary to general opinion – the 'modern problem of free will (or freedom of decision) and determinism' can be detected in Stoic

[1] Cf. e.g. A. Gercke, 'Chrysippea', *Jahrb. für klass. Phil.* Supplbd 14 (1885) 698, M. Pohlenz, *Die Stoa* (Göttingen 1959²) vol. I, 104–105 and vol. II, 60; S. Sambursky, *Physics of the Stoics* (London 1959) 57ff.; P. Huby, 'The First Discovery of the Freewill Problem', *Philosophy* 42 (1964) 358–59; M. Forschner, *Die stoische Ethik* (Stuttgart 1981) 98; P. Mackendrick, *The Philosophical Books of Cicero* (London 1989) 200–202; R. J. Hankinson, *The Sceptics* (London/New York 1995) 101.

[2] See below n. 54 for proponents of this view.

philosophy with some certainty only in the last of the three stages. One reason why these points have often been overlooked is easily explained: the sources are usually examined from a modern point of view, with a modern conceptual apparatus and modern philosophical problems in mind, instead of an approach from within Greek terminology and the conceptual system of the Stoics themselves.

If one wants to discuss Stoic freedom, the first problem that one encounters is one of terminology. The English word 'freedom' is used in very different philosophical contexts. We talk about freedom of choice, freedom of decision, freedom of action, political freedom (liberty), freedom of indifference, physical and metaphysical freedom; about free will, freedom of the will, being free and having freedom.[3] What kind(s) of freedom did the Stoics talk about then, and what words, terms, and expressions were available to them? The only Greek noun that is standardly translated as 'freedom' is *eleutheria*, together with its cognate adjective *eleutheros*, 'free'. These expressions no doubt denote freedom in some sense, and they play an important role in Stoic philosophy. However, in our sources of Hellenistic philosophy *eleutheria*[4] never occurs in the context of the debate over freedom as a necessary condition for moral responsibility and purposeful action. What words were used in the Hellenistic discussion of *this* problem? As a matter of fact, there appears to have been no noun for 'freedom' in this context. Instead, all we have are a couple of propositional phrases: *eph' hēmin* and *par' hēmas*: I translate them both as 'depend(ing) on us'.[5] The first expression, *eph' hēmin*, is familiar from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.[6] Later it gained general acceptance as the standard way of referring to the kind of human self-determination at issue in the discussions of the compatibility of moral responsibility with determinism.[7] The second phrase, *par' hēmas*, is more common in Epicurean contexts.[8] We do not know for certain whether Chrysippus used either (or both) of these expressions. I consider it likely that he used the phrase '*eph' hēmin*'.[9] If we

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[3] The Italian *libertá*, the French *liberté*, and the German *Freiheit* have comparable ranges of use.

[4] I transliterate *eleutheria* and *eleutheros*, rather than translating them, since one purpose of this paper is to keep clear the various concepts of freedom of the ancients, and not to evoke incongruous connotations, as the word 'freedom' easily does.

[5] The option of transliteration is not really open in this case, since we do not know which expression(s) the early Stoics used, cf. n. 10. The translation 'depend(ing) on us' is not ideal; but for my purposes it is preferable to the alternatives 'up to us', 'in our power' and 'attributable to us', since it shares an ambiguity present in the Greek *eph' hēmin*. *Eph' hēmin* can convey the sense both of something's being 'up to someone' and of something's being 'dependent (e.g. causally) on someone'. There is a tradition of rendering or understanding *to eph' hēmin* and even *to par' hēmas* as 'free will' or 'freedom' (so for instance SamburSky (1959) 61. W. Theiler, 'Tacitus und die antike Schicksalslehre' in *Phyllobolia für P. von der Muehll* (Basel 1946) 85–6 with n. 164, J. Talanga, *Zukunftsurteile und Fatum* (Bonn 1986) 150, 'Chrysippos' in *Der kleine Pauly* 1170, R. Dobbin, 'Προαίρεσις in Epictetus', *Ancient Philosophy* 11 (1991) 124 and J. Dillon, *Alcinous. The Handbook of Platonism* (Oxford 1993) 35.) We shall see that at least in the case of the Stoics this is rather misleading.

[6] Aristotle *NE* III 3 and III 5.

[7] Cf. e.g. Alexander *fat*; Epictetus *diss*; Porphyrius in Stobaeus *ecl* II 163–73 (Wachsmuth), Nemesius *nat hom* 104–120 (Morani).

[8] E.g. Diogenes Laertius X 133; Epicurus *nat*, liber incertus, 34.26.6,12 (Arrighetti), Philodemus *sign* 36.14. In the first passage Epicurus uses 'without master (*adespoton*) to describe that which depends on us; cf. also n. 30 below.

[9] This is the standard term in later Stoic philosophy (cf. e.g. Epictetus *diss* I 1; Marcus Aurelius VI.32; Alexander *fat*); moreover, the Latin phrases *in nostra potestate* and (*sita*) *in nobis*, which we find in discussions of Chrysippus' and in general of Stoic compatibilism, e.g. in Cicero (*fat* 40, 41, 43), Gellius (VII 2.15) and Augustine (*civ dei* V 10), are most probably translations of the phrase *eph' hēmin*. On the other hand, in Diogenianus' presentation and criticism of Chrysippus' books on fate, we find *par' hēmas* (Diogenianus in Eusebius *PE* e.g. 321.1, 323.1, 326.22, 327.9). This

retranslate into Greek from Cicero's report from Chrysippus, it appears that *eph' hēmin* was used as a prepositional phrase in predicative position: *eph' hēmin esti*, '(something) depends on us' – just as we find it earlier in Aristotle (*NE* III 5). Only much later do we encounter a substantivation of the phrase, obtained by pre-positing a neuter article: τὸ ἐφ ἡμῖν, 'the depending on us' or 'that which depends on us' (see below). The lack of such a noun-phrase in the context of moral responsibility and determinism in early Stoic philosophy may be an indication that this concept of that which depends on us was not itself a subject of the philosophical discussion.

Two further differences in terminology should be noted when one deals with the Stoics on "free will" and moral responsibility. Firstly, as is well-known, the early Stoics had no noun expression for 'will' (as in 'free will'), presumably since they had no concept of a separate faculty of the will.[10] So whatever the Stoic problem of freedom and responsibility was, it was not centred around some faculty of the will. Secondly, they had no term for moral responsibility. Instead of using an abstract phrase, moral responsibility was talked about in terms of attributability of praise and blame, punishment and reward. This is a shared feature in Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics.[11] Epictetus occasionally uses the term 'accountable for' (*hupeuthunos*) in a way that suggests moral accountability might be at issue (*diss* I 12.32–5). Thus we can see that the linguistic tools available to the Stoics were quite different from ours. Accordingly, we should expect that their phrasing of the problems, their thoughts and argumentation, and also their concepts may sometimes have no straightforward parallels in modern philosophical theories of freedom and responsibility. This is of some relevance to what follows.

2. EARLY STOICS: ZENO, CLEANTHES, CHRYSIPPUS

2.1 The early Stoic concept of that which depends on us[12]

In the time of the early Stoics – in fact it seems from Aristotle to Carneades – it was generally assumed that a condition for holding a person responsible for an action (or omission) is that this action *depended on* that person. There is no evidence in the period of a discussion or dispute over *which* kinds of things depend on someone. Apparently there was agreement that human actions (and omissions) in general depended on the agents. Accordingly, we do not find a philosophical (or other) definition of that which depends on us.[13] There is no reason to believe that *eph' hēmin* and *par' hēmas* were

suggests that either Chrysippus used *par' hēmas* (in addition to or instead of *eph' hēmin*) or Diogenianus made use of Epicurean terminology in these passages.

[10] Cf. A. Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1982); A. J. Voelke, *L'idée de la volonté dans le stoicisme*, Bibliothèque de philosophie contemporaine (Paris 1973); C. H. Kahn, 'Discovering the will: From Aristotle to Augustine', in J. M Dillon and A. A. Long, *The Question of Eclecticism* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1988) 234–259.

[11] E.g. *NE* 1109b30–5. Diogenes Laertius X 133–4, Gellius VII 2.4–13. In the same passage in Diogenes, Epicurus calls necessity 'not accountable' (*anupeuthunon*), but I doubt that moral accountability is intended here.

[12] The Stoic theory of causal determinism and the arguments of the Stoics and their opponents concerning the compatibility of this theory and moral responsibility which I present in sections 2.1 and 4 are discussed in more detail in my forthcoming book *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy*.

[13] Except if one reads the characterization of that which is *par' hēmas* in Diogenianus in Eusebius *PE* 326.21–3 as a definition and as Chrysippean: εἴ γε καλεῖν προείληφεν [i.e. Chrysippus] . . . παρ'ἡμᾶς δὲ ὅσα ἔκ τοῦ σπουδάζειν ἡμᾶς καὶ ἐνεργεῖν ἐπὶ τέλος ἔρχεται ἢ παρὰ τὸ ἀμελεῖν καὶ ῥᾳθυμεῖν οὐκ ἐπιτελεῖται. Aristotle, although not presenting a definition, states more than once that in situations in which it is *eph' hēmin* to act, it is also *eph' hēmin* not to act; cf. e.g. *NE*

technical terms, and it seems that the meaning of the phrases in these contexts was taken to be unproblematic and generally understood.

The reason why Chrysippus nonetheless dealt with the concept of that which depends on us is that the Stoics had run into the accusation that their theory of fate would conflict with the fact that there are things that depend on us. The Stoic doctrine of fate (*heimarmenē*) is basically a theory of universal causal determinism (combined with a teleological element).[14] Crudely simplified, it states that everything that happens does so in accordance with fate (DL VII 149), or that everything is fated, with fate defined as the network of causes in the world (Nemesius *nat hom* 108.15–17). The claim that everything is fated is hence understood as meaning that every event has causes that precede it and because of which it occurs (Cicero *fat* 21, 41–2, [Plutarch] *fat* 574e). Moreover, the Stoics maintained that that which will happen in the future is already determined in the present, and what is more, was always determined in the past (Cicero *div* 125–6, *fat* 27, Stobaeus *ecl* I 79).

The conflict between this Stoic 'causal fate-determinism'[15] and the claim that there are things that depend on us is then as follows: when something happens in accordance with fate and by virtue of preceding causes, then it happens no longer by virtue of ourselves. Hence it is not in our power, does not depend on *us*, but depends on fate. And hence it becomes impossible to attribute praise and blame to us. A typical argument that frames this objection can be found in Gellius:

> If Chrysippus ... believes that all things are set in motion and ruled by fate, and that it is not possible that the ways and coils of fate are bent or transcended, then the sins and misdeeds of human beings too should not ... be attributed to them and their volitions, but to a certain necessity and perseverance, which arises from fate ...[16]

In response to such arguments, Chrysippus set out to demonstrate that although everything is fated or causally predetermined, nonetheless some things depend on us.[17] Of Chrysippus' various counter-arguments and defences of the Stoic position, the following two are of special relevance to our understanding of his concept of that which depends on us, and of his compatibilist position. First, he argues that the fact that everything is fated does not entail that every event is necessary or necessitated, nor that what does and does not happen depends completely on the impact of external forces and hindrances. This he does by making use of his modal theory. Secondly, Chrysippus shows that and how actions (and certain mental events), i.e. the things generally considered to depend on us, depend on *us*, despite their being fated. This part of his argumentation belongs to the area of psychology.

1113b7–8, i.e. he had what I will call a two-sided concept of that which is *eph' hēmin*. As we shall see, this feature is not implied by the Stoic concept of that which depends on us.

[14] Cf. Stobaeus *ecl* I 79.1ff.; Plutarch *Stoic rep* 1056c, *comm not* 1076e.

[15] I include the reference to fate in this expression as a reminder of the teleological element which is part of Stoic determinism.

[16] Gellius *NA* VII 2.5; see Cicero *fat* 40 for a similar argument against the Stoics.

[17] This he did in his second book on fate. Cf. Diogenianus in Eusebius *PE* 325.26–8.

2.1.1 Modality

First, then, a few words about Chrysippus' use of his modal logic. He endeavoured to show that the fact that something is fated to happen, does not make it necessary; and that the fact that something is fated not to happen does not make it impossible (Cicero *fat* 13). In other words, he argued that his theory of fate is not deterministic in the sense that everything that happens is necessary and everything that does not happen is impossible. His concepts of possibility, impossibility, necessity and non-necessity are defined in such a way that those things that are commonly considered to depend on us come out as neither impossible nor necessary; that is they come out as contingent – despite their being fated. What is more, the modal concepts bring out one necessary condition for something's depending on us. Chrysippus defines the concept of possibility and non-necessity by giving two conditions for each. Following Diogenes Laertius VII 75[18] that which is possible

(i) must be capable of being true (of happening) and
(ii) must not be prevented by external things from being true (from happening);

and accordingly, that which is non-necessary

(iii) must be capable of being false (of not happening) and
(iv) must not be prevented by external things from being false (from not happening);
i.e. must not be forced to be true (to happen).[19]

There are then four conditions for contingency: two concerning general 'capability', two concerning 'external things or circumstances'. Something is contingent precisely when it is capable of happening and not happening, and when it is neither prevented by external things from happening, nor forced to happen by such things.

That which is contingent includes most human actions, i.e. the things usually considered to depend on us. For instance, if it now depends on me to walk, then it is now possible that I walk; and it is not necessary that I walk, and hence it is also possible that I do not walk. It is important to see that this 'two-sided' possibility (to walk and not to walk) is not the same as the claim that, when I then walk, there was *no cause* for my walking. (It also does not entail that if it depended on me to walk, it also depended on me not to walk. Rather, Chrysippus' concept of that which depends on us appears to have been 'one-sided' only.)[20] All that is maintained is that I am capable of both walking and

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[18] We can be confident that Diogenes reports Chrysippus' definitions, for we know that Chrysippus developed his own modal concepts, which were meant to improve on Diodorus' (Cicero *fat* 12–14), and in Plutarch (*Stoic rep* 1055d-f) we find remnants of Diogenes' accounts — with identical formulations — ascribed to Chrysippus. For a detailed discussion of Stoic modalities see M. Frede, *Die stoische Logik* (Göttingen 1974) 107–17; S. Bobzien, 'Chrysippus' modal logic and its relation to Philo and Diodorus', in K. Döring and T. Ebert (eds.), *Dialektiker und Stoiker* (Stuttgart 1993) 63–84.

[19] In Diogenes Laertius, the modal accounts are given in terms of truth and falsehood, and the modalities are understood as properties of Stoic propositions (*axiōmata*). However, in the context of the discussion of fate-determinism and freedom, modalities were also used of events or that which happens (*ginomena*) and of that which does not happen (*mē ginomena*) and of causes (e.g. Cicero *fat* 13, 42, 44; Alexander *fat* 176.14–18; Augustine *civ dei* V 10). In the following I disregard various subtleties of Stoic ontology and simply assume e.g. that the proposition 'Diotima walks' is possible precisely when it is possible that Diotima walks, that 'Diotima walks' is capable of being true precisely if Diotima is capable of walking, and that 'Diotima walks' is prevented by external things from being true precisely when Diotima is prevented by external things from walking.

[20] This is at least suggested by his claim that that which depends on us (that which is *par' hēmas*) is encompassed by fate. Cf. Diogenianus in Eusebius *PE* 327.4–5. [Plutarch] *epit* I 27, DD 322, 9–13. See also below section 4.

not walking, and that in the particular situation in which I am, I am neither externally forced to walk nor externally hindered from walking, e.g. I am not chained to a wall or I have not passed out, etc. Nonetheless, according to Chrysippus, there are causes for my walking, for instance that I had the sense-impression of a Renaissance church in the distance, and – because of my interest in Renaissance architecture – I thereupon decided to go and have a closer look at it. This fits in with Chrysippus' causal fate-determinism as follows: If every movement or change of an object were completely causally determined by causes external to that object, and the object were hence in some sense externally forced to change, then every event would not only be fated, but also necessary. However, there are changes or movements that are not completely causally determined by outside causes, and which are the kind of change that as far as the nature of the object is concerned, in general could or could not take place. For Chrysippus, these changes are, although caused, not necessary. That is, for Chrysippus 'being fated' is not synonymous with 'being externally necessitated' or 'being externally forced or hindered'. There is a realm of contingent events, of events which are neither forced to happen nor hindered from happening, and this is where the things that depend on us belong.

2.1.2 Psychology

Chrysippus' second argumentation which furthers our understanding of the early Stoic concept of that which depends on us is his explication of how what is fated can, nonetheless, depend on us. Chrysippus set out to show how it can be that, even though every event is causally determined in every detail, the things that were traditionally regarded as depending on *us* are still in some sufficient sense *ours*, so that we cannot pass the buck to fate. (Recall the Gellius passage quoted above.) What Chrysippus provides is in fact a causal analysis of the psychological process that takes place in the case of human actions.

Again strongly simplified, Chrysippus' analysis of action is as follows: an impulsive impression (*phantasia hormētikē*), i.e. an impression of something as desirable, occurs in a human being's soul.[21] It is, at least ultimately, triggered by something external to the soul. This impression sets in motion the faculty of assent in that it suggests that the human being should assent to it. But – unlike non-rational animals – human beings have in principle the ability to withhold assent to incoming impressions. Whether or not a person yields to the impression by assenting to it depends on that person's state of the soul. In the case that assent is given, the impression is a cause of it insofar as it activated the faculty of assent. Such an assent to an impulsive impression automatically brings about – or according to one source, is nothing but – a human impulse or intention (*hormē*), and this intention is then translated into an action (*praxis*).[22] To take a simple example, the impression of a bar of chocolate as something desirable ('I should eat this chocolate') activates someone's faculty of assent, so that, in response, it either yields to this impression (response: 'yes') or does not yield to it. In the case of a positive response, this automatically sets in motion – or is nothing but – the intention to eat the chocolate. This intention in turn will make the person start and carry through the action of eating the chocolate in due course. Thus, although there is a cause of the action that comes

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[21] For the Stoics all impressions human beings have are rational impressions, i.e. they have propositional structure. An impression that presents something as desirable, may be represented along the lines of 'I should pursue ...'.

[22] Cf. Cicero *fat* 40–43; Plutarch *Stoic rep* 1037f and 1057a-c; Stobaeus *ecl* II 86–88. For a thorough study of Stoic theory of action see B. Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism* (Oxford 1985).

ultimately from outside, the action is not completely externally determined. For it is the faculty of assent in the human mind which determines whether the person gives in to the impulsive impression.[23]

Now the faculties of assent, and in general the souls of different individuals are in different states or conditions. It is for this reason that, when receiving comparable external impressions, one person may give, another withhold assent, depending on the state of their souls: for instance, one may be very greedy, the other more restrained.[24] Thus, although the externally induced impression may be the only active cause, the result does not exclusively depend on this cause, but rather on the persons themselves. The person is the originator of the resulting action. The action hence depends on that person, who can then be held responsible for it.[25] However, at the same time it is true that the person's soul, the externally induced cause, and presumably the external circumstances,[26] all taken together determine the outcome completely. They all are part of the causal network that is fate.[27] Thus Chrysippus has shown that the Stoic concept of causal fate-determinism is compatible with the fact that there are things that depend on us. The conflict between fate and things that depend on us has turned out to be only apparent: for we are part of the causal network that is fate, and what actions we do is not determined by external factors, or force, or necessity, but by what persons we are. For the attribution of moral responsibility it is thought sufficient to trace an action back to the person that acted, or more precisely to that person's soul or character.[28] The concept of freedom involved in this early debate on fate and responsibility is that of not being externally determined to act, or of not being in any way forced to act. But note that this concept of freedom is not the same as the concept of that which depends on us. An action depends on me if (having given assent to the corresponding impulsive impression) I bear the chief causal responsibility for it and am in this sense its originator. It is in order for this to be possible that I must not be compelled to act or externally prevented from acting, i.e. that I must be free from necessitating and hindering influences. Such a concept of freedom is implied both by Chrysippus' modal theory and by his defence of that which depends on us; but it is never discussed directly in these contexts.

There are no signs that Chrysippus or any other early Stoic or any of their Hellenistic opponents considered the problem of free will or of freedom of decision, i.e. the question of whether in a particular situation where a decision is made, given the same or relevantly similar circumstances, and given the same character or dispositions of the soul, the agent could have decided and acted otherwise.[29] It is regarded as a necessary condition for the

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[23] Cf. Gellius VII 2.7–9.

[24] I take it that in Cicero *fat* 42–3 the *two* examples of the cylinder and the spinning top are chosen as analogues of two human souls or minds that are in different states, and hence would move differently, despite having comparable impressions.

[25] Cf. Gellius VII 2.11; Cicero *fat* 42–3.

[26] The external circumstances have to be 'favourable', as it were: as Chrysippus' modal theory makes clear, external activating cause and assent alone are not sufficient for an action's depending on us: in addition, possible hindering and forcing circumstances have to be absent.

[27] Cf. Gellius VII 2.7–10.

[28] The person's state of soul and character are of course in the end externally determined. But that is a different story.

[29] It is true, Epicurus may have postulated uncaused movements. However, as far as I can see, there is no decisive evidence that he connected this idea with the questions of whether our decisions are undetermined by preceding causes, whether under the same circumstances we could act differently or choose otherwise, or even generally, whether alternative courses of actions are open to us. Rather, just as in the case of the early Stoics, the problem is how *we* can be causally

attributability of praise and blame (and hence for the possibility of ethics) that we are the originators of our actions. But there are no signs that freedom of decision was considered a necessary condition for justified praise or blame.

2.2 Early Stoics on *eleutheria*

The concept of *eleutheria* was part of Stoic philosophy from its very beginning, i.e. from Zeno onwards; but there are few testimonies about *eleutheria* that can be assigned with certainty to the early Stoa. In Diogenes Laertius we find a passage from Zeno's *Republic* where he declares that 'only the wise or virtuous are true citizens or friends or kindred or free men (*eleutherous*), and that all those who are not wise are enemies, slaves and aliens to one another (DL VII 32–33, with parallels in Cicero *pro Mur* 61). Further we have from Zeno a remark in Philo that no one could 'force any wise man to do unwillingly anything that he does not want to do' (*quod omnis probus liber* 97), and a modification of a Sophoclean verse on freeman and slave (Plutarch *aud poet* 33d). Cleanthes wrote a book on *eleutheria* (DL VII 175), but apart from its title nothing has survived.[30] We have nothing at all on *eleutheria* that is attributed directly to Chrysippus. Of the passages listed in von Arnim that deal with *eleutheria*, four more might be early Stoic.[31] They are Stobaeus *eclog* II 101.15–20, Cicero *fin* III 75 and *Acad* II 136, and Diogenes Laertius VII 121. This last passage gives a definition of *eleutheria*, as *exousia autopragias*, which could be early Stoic.[32] Now, we know that Chrysippus used *autopragia* in the sense of 'doing what is one's own' (*ta autou prattein*, Plut. *Stoic rep* 1043b). Accordingly, *eleutheria* would then be the power of managing one's own things. That is, you are *eleutheros* if you have the power of doing what you want or what you should do.

All testimonies on Stoic *eleutheria*, without exception, belong to ethics or politics.[33] *Eleutheria* and *eleutheros* are typically contrasted with *douleia* and *doulos*, and the

responsible for our actions, beliefs etc. rather than being necessitated by something else (this is the reason for the occurrence of *adespoton* in DL X 133); and the requirements for moral responsibility are freedom from compulsion and hindrances and self-origination of our actions. There is one difference though. Due to Epicurus' atomism he faces the additional threat of *internal* necessitation by the atoms of which a living being, or its soul, is constituted (cf. *nat liber incertus* 34.21ff., Lucretius 2.264–293). Arguably, this brings Epicurus closer to the modern discussion of neuro-physiological determinism and free will than the Stoics seem to have been. I hope to discuss these questions in full elsewhere.

As to Aristotle and the Peripatetics, it has been argued repeatedly that we have no reasons to assume that Aristotle resorted to uncaused events to preserve the concepts of voluntary action and moral responsibility (e.g. R. Sorabji, *Necessity, Cause and Blame* (Ithaca 1980) 228–233; T. Irwin, 'Reason and Responsibility in Aristotle', in A. O. Rorty (ed.), *Essays in Aristotle's Ethics* (Berkeley 1980) 117–155; W. G. Englert, *Epicurus on the Swerve and Voluntary Action* (Atlanta 1987) ch. V). The passage which most resembles modern discussions of the free will problem, including the question of our responsibility for our character, is *NE* III 5. S. S. Meyer has recently suggested a plausible interpretation of this passage, according to which Aristotle was not concerned with the problem of free will and freedom of decision in the modern sense (in S. S. Meyer, *Aristotle on Moral Responsibility* (Oxford 1993)).

[30] Perhaps Philo's book *On the fact that only the wise are free* and the fifth of Cicero's *Stoic paradoxes* on the same topic may give us some general idea of the issues that Cleanthes dealt with.

[31] As to the remaining passages quoted by von Arnim (*SVF* III 359–364 from Philo's *quod omnis probus liber*, 603 from Philo's *de sobrietate*, and *SVF* III 356 and 365 from Dio Chrysostomus), they do not mention Stoics at all, and although clearly Stoicising, must contain material later than Chrysippus.

[32] Similarly, Origen reports, as an opinion of 'the Greeks', καὶ μόνον καὶ πάντα τὸν σοφὸν εἶναι ἐλεύθερον, ἐξουσίαν αὐτοπραγίας ἀπὸ τοῦ θείου νόμου εἰληφότα (*evang Ioannis* II 10).

[33] This holds also of the later passages in Philo's *quod omnis probus liber* and of Dio Chrysostomus, and of Cicero's fifth Stoic paradox.

philosophical use of the concepts in ethics seems to have taken its origin from the analogy with politics and public life, as in Zeno's *Republic* (see above). Most sources make the point that only the sage is (truly) *eleutheros* whereas common mortals are all (truly) slaves.[34] *Eleutheros* is further typically cited as one of a number of positive attributes all of which belong only to wise persons;[35] in early sources often with political attributes, later with any attributes of virtue. 'True' *eleutheria* depends on the disposition (*diathesis*) of the wise person's soul, which is stable and in a state of ideal tension. As regards *eleutheria*, this state of soul has a twofold effect on the person's behaviour: internally, the *eleutheros* is master of his emotions (*nec obediens cupiditati*, Cicero *fin* III 75); externally, the *eleutheros* cannot be bribed or blackmailed into actions which he does not want to perform (*nec dominationi cuiusquam parens*, (ibid.)). In none of the testimonies on early Stoics is there any connection drawn between *eleutheria* and that which depends on us.[36] *Eleutheria*, as I have said, belongs exclusively to ethics (including politics); that which depends on us belongs to physics, in particular to psychology. Function and purpose of the two concepts in early Stoic philosophy are quite different. Only the wise are *eleutheroi*, but wise and non-wise people alike are responsible for their actions; their actions depend on them in exactly the same way. Whether one is a slave of one's passions or bribed into actions by other people, one is accountable for one's deeds and omissions in exactly the same way as the wise person is.[37] (There is also no mention of the wise having more choices or possibilities in their actions; they differ from common people rather in that they follow up the right choices and are not tempted by the wrong alternatives. This is not to deny that by performing certain actions one widens one's future choices, by performing others one narrows them down, and that it cannot be ruled out that on balance the wise may end up with more choices.)

3. EPICTETUS

3.1 Epictetus and that which depends on us

Both the concept of *eph' hēmin* and the concept of *eleutheria* are central to the part of Epictetus' philosophy which is extant, recorded by his pupil Arrian.[38] I shall deal with these two Epictetan concepts, and their relation to each other. This is of course not the place to give a detailed analysis of Epictetus' philosophy of freedom through self-restriction. I shall confine myself to pointing out some changes in emphasis, interest, topics and use of terminology in Epictetus, in order to be able to outline the main differences between his and Chrysippus' conceptions of freedom.

Regarding the concept of that which depends on us, Chrysippus' concern was, first, with securing certain necessary conditions for that which depends on us, second, with the proof that the things commonly seen as depending on us depend in fact on us, and that Stoic causal fate-determinism does not conflict with this. Chrysippus did not ask what the

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[34] E.g. DL VII 32–3; Stobaeus *ecl* II 101.15–20; Cicero *Acad* II 136.

[35] E.g. DL VII 32–3; Cicero *Acad* II 136.

[36] Note also that Cicero deals with both topics, with *eleutheria* in the *paradoxa Stoicorum*, with the Stoic position on that which depends on us in the *de fato*, and that he draws no connection at all between the two.

[37] The difference between the early Stoic concept of that which depends on us and the early Stoic concept of *eleutheria* has been aptly pointed out by C. Stough, 'Stoic determinism and moral responsibility', in J. M. Rist (ed.), *The Stoics* (Berkeley/Los Angeles 1978) 224.

[38] Epictetus (AD c.55–c.135) was a pupil of the Stoic Musonius (AD c.30–c.100), and for most of the following points we find some related ideas in the few extant fragments of Musonius (in Stobaeus); this makes it likely that Epictetus took over many of his ideas from his teacher.

things were which depend on us. It appears that he took it for granted that there was general agreement about that question. For Epictetus, on the other hand the main concern is which the particular kinds of things are that depend on us. An agreement about that is no longer taken for granted. The two different topics were also terminologically differentiated: Chrysippus was concerned with what was later called *to eph' hēmin*; Epictetus is primarily interested in *ta eph' hēmin*, i.e. the kinds of things that depend on us.[39] With this difference in interest there goes hand in hand a difference in how the expression 'depending on us' is used. According to Chrysippus, an individual state or change depends on me if I, *qua* rational being, am causally responsible for it; that is, if it is caused primarily by an act of assent of mine. Hence (i) the element of causation, and in this sense, of self-origination is predominant, and (ii) in order to determine whether something depends on me, the individual case has to be examined. In Epictetus (i) the element of causation is not discussed, and the factor of self-origination is seldom emphasized, although the occasional use of phrases like *kurios* and *autexousios* suggests that it was presupposed. Moreover (ii), in order to establish whether an individual change or state depends on us, it seems that for Epictetus what matters is whether it belongs to a class of things that *cannot* be externally hindered or forced. This means that whereas according to Chrysippus, if I take a walk and nothing hinders me from walking, my walking presumably depends on me (I caused it by assenting to an impulsive impression of the kind 'you should take a walk'), for Epictetus it does not depend on me, since in principle something *could* prevent me from walking, even if in this case nothing does (cf. *diss* IV 1.68–73). Thus for Epictetus the modality of the expression 'depending on us' has changed and he singles out as things that depend on us only those which are in our power under all possible circumstances and with absolute certainty. He is concerned with the things (activities, behaviour) that in the course of one's life can under no circumstances be prevented or spoiled by external circumstances, including other people. It is the question of someone who plans their future life and actions and wants to know which factors of this future life can be relied on with certainty.

The motivation for such questions – as it is usually presented by Epictetus – is how one can avoid failures and disappointments and how one can keep or attain an undisturbed and well-poised emotional state. That is, the motivation is chiefly prudential and pragmatic: if one is aware of the limits of one's power, one's future plans will be more realistic (they will probably include more ifs and whens)[40] and consequently one's future disappointments are minimized. The field thus is practical philosophy and ethics inasmuch as ethics helps one to attain happiness (*eudaimonia*). For, and not surprisingly, the only way to minimize frustration and to subsequently acquire true happiness is by consistently pursuing the morally right end (*telos*), which is, in one common Stoic description, to live in accordance with nature. The perspective has thus become a perspective towards the future, concerned with guidance of actions and behaviour; before, in Chrysippus and the old Stoa it primarily was a backwards perspective or time

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[39] For Chrysippus neither of the substantivized forms are known. *to eph' hēmin* occurs in Plutarch e.g. (*Stoic rep* 1056d). I have not found *ta eph' hēmin* as (semi) technical term in any Stoic text before Musonius. (The explanatory clause about things that depend on us in Epiphanius *adv haer* III 36 (DD 692.25–6), which is ascribed to Zeno, I take to be later and not originally by Zeno.)

[40] Cf. Inwood (1985) 119–26 and 165–75 for 'reservation' (*hupexairesis*) in Seneca and Epictetus.

independent, concerned with the attribution of responsibility and with the moral assessment of actions.[41]

Accordingly, for Epictetus, the range of things that satisfy the condition of depending on us is much more limited than it was 'traditionally'. He puts in the class of the things that depend on us (*ta eph' hēmin*) primarily – or perhaps even exclusively – the 'use of impressions' (*hē chrēsis tōn phantasiōn*) which for him means: the mental events of assenting and intending, and certain refrainings from action.[42] In the class of things that do not depend on us (*ta ouk eph' hēmin*) he puts everything else that has some influence on our life, i.e. our (positive) actions, the results of our activities, the things called 'indifferents' in Stoic ethics, like health, wealth, life, death – and, as Chrysippus and the tradition had done, the impressions themselves.[43] One can easily see how this restriction was brought about: if we use the Epictetan criterion for future actions, the result is meagre. For nearly every activity that involves intentional bodily movements however small, we can imagine some external obstacles that will prevent it from being carried out. With (positive) actions such as walking, eating or escaping one's enemy, we can never be sure that they will be in our power. Things look a bit better in cases in which assent is given in favour of not being active, i.e. in favour of refraining from action. In those cases one can argue (as Epictetus in effect does repeatedly) that external influences cannot prevent one from 'inactivity'.[44] But the safest bets are assent and intention. External hindrances are not conceivable there. Neither natural nor human force can prevent them from occurring, as Epictetus never tires of repeating. For Epictetus, assent, intention and refraining from action depend on us, because we have the general ability to perform them, and no one and nothing external to us has the power of interfering and keeping us from performing them.

Philosophically there is perhaps less of a difference between Epictetus and the early Stoa than this account makes one think. The underlying general idea of which things depend on us seems to be the same as for Chrysippus: in order to depend on us something (i) has to be originated by us, hence we must not be forced, and (ii) it must not be prevented by external circumstances. But Epictetus is not concerned with establishing that there are things that depend on us. Rather he employs the concept of that which depends on us within ethics, and although such an application is not recorded for early Stoic ethics, we can easily see how Epictetus' concept of that which depends on us fits in with it. Antipater had determined the end (*telos*) of human life as 'to do everything in one's power (*kath hauton*) continuously and undeviatingly with a view to obtaining the predominating things which accord with nature.' (Stobaeus II 76.13–15, trans. Long/Sedley). What Antipater had in mind becomes clearer from the analogy with the archer, in which the Stoics distinguished between aiming straight at the target and actually striking it (Cicero *fin* III 22). The end is doing everything to attain one's object;

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[41] It ties in with this change of perspective that whereas Chrysippus' concept of that which depends on us may have been one-sided (i.e. the opposite of that which depends on us does not depend on us, see above), some passages in Epictetus suggest that his concept is two-sided. for instance, if it depends on me to assent to an impression, it also depends on me not to assent to it (see e.g. *diss* I 1.17; 1.23, II 13.10–11; 19.32–4, III 24.23). In *this* respect, the things that depend on us would double, compared to Chrysippus'. This does not entail that for Epictetus that which depends on us is uncaused or undetermined.

[42] These also depend on us according to Chrysippus, cf. Cicero *fat.* 40–43; Gellius VII 2.11.

[43] For Epictetus, typical passags are: *ench* 1, 2 and 5; *diss* I 1.7; 1.12; 1.22–3; 6.40; 12.34; 22.10; II 5.8; 19.32; III 24.3; 24.69; 24.108; IV 1.68–75. For Musonius, see Stobaeus *ecl* II 159.25–160.11 (fr. 38 Hense).

[44] E.g. *diss* I.1.22–4.

from this has to be distinguished the actual achieving of the object. Of these only the former is in our power. Here Epictetus comes in with the expression 'that which depends on us': he uses it to denote the realm within which we can do everything to attain our object, and he relegates the actual achieving of the object (or not, depending on the circumstances) to the sphere of that which does not depend on us.

This, it seems to me, is all there is to Epictetus' concept of that which depends on us. There is no evidence that this concept had anything to do with the choice of alternatives, let alone free (undetermined) choice or agent causality. (Behind it there lies the 'I–cannot-be-bribed-or-blackmailed-into-doing-certain-things' idea of freedom.) As in the case of Chrysippus, there is no hint that Epictetus considered whether someone *could have done otherwise* in the sense that in identical circumstances the very same person could end up once doing something, once not doing it. The interpretation that according to Epictetus we are free to choose whether we give assent and whether we want something (in the sense that in the narrow boundaries of that which depends on us we are not causally predetermined in our choice) is simply wrong.[45] Epictetus does not reflect upon the ability to choose freely between performing or not performing an activity. Rather, in some sense, this ability seems always implicitly presupposed.[46] Suppose, for example, that I am externally forced to go to prison. If I then happen to choose not to go, my choice will be frustrated, inasmuch as the object of my willing is externally prevented from realization. If, complying with god's plan, I happen to choose to go to prison, my choice will not be frustrated. In the same way my choice will never be frustrated in cases in which I 'choose' to give assent or to have an intention to do something. But, as far as the act of choice itself and its determinedness are concerned, there is no difference in all these cases – whether or not my choice is frustrated.[47] Epictetus' occasional use of the term *autexousios* in the context of the discussion of things that depend on us does not indicate any concern with the topic of undetermined choice either. In later texts *to autexousion* becomes synonymous with *to eph' hēmin* (see below), and sometimes involves the ability to choose freely or to start a motion without preceding cause, but in Epictetus it does not have these connotations. Epictetus clearly contrasts *autexousios* with someone else's power or authority (*exousia*) over oneself. *Autexousios* indicates that something is outside the sphere of influence of others, and because of that in the sphere of my power. That is, we have the same contrast of the possibility of external hindrances and

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[45] A more recent advocate of this view is Dobbin (1991), e.g. 121, 133. Generally, this interpretation assumes that for Epictetus we have *no choice* in the case of things that do not depend on us, e.g. whether we go to prison. Independently of what we decide or want, if we have to go, we will have to go; but that we have undetermined *free choice* in the case of things that depend on us: we cannot choose whether or not we will go to prison, but it is a matter of undetermined choice whether or not we accept (give assent in favour of) going to prison, and whether we go to prison willingly or unwillingly.

[46] Within the realm of that which depends on us we are repeatedly advised to go for those things that are in accordance with nature and to avoid those that are contrary to nature; cf. e.g. *ench* 2, 48.3; *diss* III 10.10–11, 11.15, 24.101–2. Equally *proairesis*, often rendered as 'moral choice' is never characterized as *undetermined* choice by Epictetus, nor does it imply indeterminedness.

[47] The passage in which Epictetus says that even god cannot prevent or hinder us in the case of things that depend on us (e.g. *diss* I 6.40) cannot be invoked to back up the claim that Epictetus deals with free choice. God's 'inability' of interfering, does not mean that, say, I can give assent to some impression although god does not want me to, but is unfortunately unable to prevent me. The point is rather (as usual) that assent and intention, on the ground of their very nature, cannot be subjected to coercion or force, which includes possible coercion or force exercised by god.

the absence of that possibility, as in the case of the distinction between 'things that depend on us' and 'things that do not depend on us'.[48]

The absence of concern with the topic of choice is familiar from Chrysippus and the early Stoics. Similarly, despite a difference in the use of expressions, there seems to be little difference between Epictetus' and the early Stoic position on moral responsibility. In the extant works, Epictetus never considers the problem of whether it is consistent with Stoic philosophy in general to maintain that people are morally responsible for some things. But he deals with the questions of praise and blame and moral accountability within ethics. Praise and blame occur in two different contexts. On the one hand, praise and blame, reward and punishment are rather some amongst those external things from the influence and importance of which one should try to free oneself, exactly because they are not in our power (e.g. *diss* II 13.2; II 16.6–11). In line with this we learn that we should not praise or blame others (*ench* 48.2). On the other hand, there is the occasional mention of the idea that the moral goodness and badness and the praiseworthiness and blameworthiness of an action does not depend on external factors, but is always derivative of the morally right or wrong beliefs (*dogmata*) from which the agent acts (*diss* IV 4.44; IV 8.1–4). We may praise or blame an agent for an action only insofar as it was brought about as the result of the right or wrong use made of the impressions. In line with this we learn that we are morally accountable (*hupeuthunos*) only for those things that depend on us (*diss* I 12.32–5). Thus Chrysippus and Epictetus agree fully on the point that actions are praiseworthy and blameworthy only insofar as they are the result of an act of assent to a practical impression – only that Epictetus restricts the terms 'depending on us' and 'accountable for' to the use we make of our impressions, whereas Chrysippus seems to have allowed at least the first one to be applied to actions as well – if only derivatively. (Since he appears to hold that actions take place in the mind, the discrepancy is even smaller than it may seem.) As for the individual cases in which someone is held responsible, i.e. for individual assent-action combinations as it were, there should be no principal disagreement between the two philosophers. Again, the difference is rather one of perspective. The change of viewpoint in Epictetus' treatment of that which depends on us has its reason in a shift of topic, interest and emphasis from the question of the possibility of moral accountability to the guidance of action. There is no indication that it is the result of any discontent on Epictetus' part with early Stoic or Chrysippean compatibilism – as appears to be the case in the Middle Platonist fate theory, in Posidonius, and others. Rather, it seems that the theoretical, abstract question of the compatibility of fate and that which depends on us has completely dropped out of sight in Epictetus' extant works. His concept of that which depends on us is *basically independent* of whether or not everything is fated. It is likely that both Epictetus' teacher Musonius and Epictetus himself believed that, in the end, everything is predetermined.

Musonius, it seems, may have stuck at least to the spirit of universal fate-determinism. For him the claim is reported that whatever happens cannot happen otherwise.[49] He presumably did not exempt the things that depend on us from this claim. Epictetus appears to have avoided talking about fate (*heimarmenē*) *qua* network of causes and the Chrysippean theory of causal fate-determinism. He repeatedly employed Cleanthes' verses on destiny (*peprōmenē*) for practical purposes (*ench* 53.1, *diss* II 23.42, III 22.95,

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[48] Cf. the use of ἐξουσίαν ἔχειν in *diss* IV 7.16 εἰς ἐμὲ οὐδεὶς ἐξουσίαν ἔχει. ἠλευθέρωμαι ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ (see also I 25.2, IV 12.8) with the use of αὐτεξούσιον in IV 1.62 τί οὖν ἐστι τὸ ποιοῦν ἀκώλυτον τὸν ἄνθρωπον καὶ αὐτεξούσιον ... and IV 1.68 πότερον οὖν οὐδὲν ἔχεις αὐτεξούσιον, ὃ ἐπὶ μόνῳ ἐστὶ σοί, ...

[49] Stobaeus *ecl* IV 44, 60 (fr 42 Hense).

IV 1.131, IV 4.34), and the concept of destiny used is that of personal fate, i.e. the common belief that the gods allot to every person their destiny. The one time when Epictetus speaks *in propria persona* about 'destiny' (*diss* I 12.25), we are presented with the idea of personal fate, too, and the terminology seems to be borrowed from Cleanthes' verses. There can be little doubt that Epictetus was convinced that god was responsible for what happens in the world, and that he pre-ordained everything (*diss* I 12.15–17). But his remarks are throughout so vague that from them one cannot make out whether god's predetermination concerns generics only, or particulars as well; and no connection is drawn to the causal interrelation of things.

To sum up, the role of that which depends on us in Epictetus' philosophy (as far as it has come down to us) differs noticeably from the function it has for the early Stoa. In early Stoic philosophy the notion of that which depends on us has its place in physics – more precisely, in Stoic psychology. It has the function of preserving the possibility of moral responsibility. It is thus a basic precondition for ethics, but not itself part of ethics. For Epictetus, the notion of that which depends on us serves – on the basis of an already established theory of morals – a predominantly practical purpose. It has its role within (first-order) ethics. It is intended to provide a means that helps people to plan and lead a good and undisturbed life. Its primary function is guidance of life and actions. Despite the different primary function assigned to the concept of that which depends on us, there is little difference between Chrysippus and Epictetus in the relevant parts of Stoic philosophy – except that in his extant works Epictetus shows no signs of any critical awareness of the problem of compatibilism. For Epictetus, as for Chrysippus, the concept of that which depends on us is not a concept concerned with the freedom of decision or of undetermined choice between alternative courses of actions.

3.2 Epictetus on *eleutheria*

The concept of *eleutheria* is central to Epictetus' philosophy as it has survived. We have an extensive essay especially on that topic (*diss* IV.1), and *eleutheria* plays a prevalent role in numerous other essays. There seems to be little difference between Epictetus' concept of *eleutheria* and the early Stoic one. But again, there is a shift in emphasis. According to Epictetus, the *eleutheros* is 'someone who lives as he wills, who is neither necessitated nor hindered nor forced, whose impulses are unhampered, whose desires reach their end ...' (*diss* IV 1.1); and again, 'someone for whom all things happen in accordance with choice and whom none can constrain' (*diss* I 12.9) and someone 'who is rid of pain, fear, and trouble' (*diss* II 1.24). As in the early Stoa, so in Epictetus *eleutheria* is a moral quality which only wise people possess, and it is frequently opposed to slavery (e.g. *diss* II 2.13). It is not connected primarily with actions, but is linked to persons and their characters or states of mind. But in Epictetus *eleutheria* occurs typically within a group of positive terms that are connected with tranquillity of mind, like *ataraxia, apatheia, akōlutos*.[50]

What mainly concerns us here is how Epictetus sees the relation between *eleutheria* and that which depends on us. Unlike the early Stoics, Epictetus expressly made the connection between the two concepts, and it is essential for an understanding of his philosophy to comprehend their relation. The relation between *his* notions of that which depends on us and *eleutheria* is then as follows. *Eleutheria* is a virtuous state of mind, desirable and to be aimed at. In order to achieve this virtue you must (i) know exactly

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[50] E.g. *diss* II 1.21, III 5.7, III 15.12, IV 1.27–8; *ench* 29. *akōlutos* also often occurs together with εφ' ἡμῖν.

what things depend on you and (ii) align your desires, life plan, etc. in such a way that you only ever want what depends on you and expect only what is within the boundaries of what depends on you. In short, you have *eleutheria* if, knowing what depends on you, you do not ever desire or deplore anything that does not depend on you.[51] Such a relation between *eleutheria* and that which depends on us is conceivable only with Epictetus' modified understanding of what depends on us. Chrysippus' conception of that which depends on us does not admit of such a relation. For whether a particular thing, an action, say, depends on us in the Chrysippean sense is contingent upon whether there are hindrances at the time of the attempted performance, and frequently agents will learn about them only when they actually try to act. Nevertheless, for Epictetus, as for the early Stoics, in general there are no more things that depend on the *eleutheros* sage than there are that depend on common people. The only difference is that the sage knows about the restrictions of that which depends on us. As to moral responsibility, common persons are no less accountable for their actions than the *eleutheros* sage, and Epictetus' restriction of that which depends on us does not diminish our moral responsibility. Thus, as in the case of the early Stoics, there is no direct connection between the concept of *eleutheria* and that of moral responsibility.[52]

3.3 Some remarks on a common modern interpretation of Stoic freedom

It can now be seen that a prevalent interpretation of Stoic theory of freedom is quite unfounded. This is the interpretation that for the Stoics *eleutheria* was to fulfil the role of a substitute for 'the real freedom of the will' (that which depends on us, interpreted as free will or freedom of decision), which, alas, was destroyed by Stoic determinism.[53] This assumption is often made in the context of the idea that free will was a mere illusion (the concept of free will a mere epistemic concept) in Stoicism and was regarded as such by the Stoics. It is then assumed that the Stoics intended to make up for this lack of freedom with their concept of *eleutheria*, the freedom reserved for the wise only, which is then referred to as 'the only freedom left for a man', and as 'the only true freedom'.[54] Thus the two concepts of that which depends on us and *eleutheria* are taken to have played roles in the discussion of a *single philosophical problem*, and moreover, they are often not properly distinguished.[55]

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[51] Cf. the essay on *eleutheria*; consider also 'And because of this, if he holds that that which is good for him and beneficial is only in those things that are free from hindrance and depend on him, he will be *eleutheros*, serene, happy ...' (*diss* IV 7.9). Cf. also Seneca, *vit beat* XV 7.

[52] This does of course not preclude that our beliefs about what we are morally responsible for can be pertinent to our progress towards *eleutheria* in various ways. For instance, as long as I believe that I bear moral responsibility for the disastrous consequences of an earthquake, since I did not succeed in preventing it from happening, the accompanyng emotional distress I feel about my 'moral failure' will, presumably, be detrimental to my progress towards *eleutheria*.

[53] So A. A. Long, 'Freedom and determinism in Stoic theory of human action', in A. A. Long (ed.), *Problems in Stoicism* (London 1971) 175, 189ff; A. A. Long / D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (Cambridge 1987), vol. I, 394; B. Inwood (n. 22) 109–111. Similarly M. Pohlenz, *Die Stoa* (Göttingen 1959³) vol. I 106; M. Forschner, *Die stoische Ethik* (Stuttgart 1981) 110–111.

[54] Inwood (n. 22) 110, Long/Sedley (n. 53) vol. I 394. But note that when Stoic sources talk about 'true freedom' in the context of *eleutheria* of the wise (e.g. Stobaeus *ecl* II 101.15–20), the contrast is with the 'illusionary freedom' of the non-wise freeman, who thinks of himself as free, but is in fact a slave. The contrast here is not with 'illusionary freedom of the will' i.e. 'that which depends on us'.

[55] Long (n. 53) 189–90; Inwood (n. 22) 109–110. This mix up leads Inwood to deliberate whether the non-wise are not in fact more free (*eleutheros* or *eph' hēmin?*) than the wise (*ibid.* 109), and

This treatment of Stoic *eleutheria* and what depends on us ignores some essential points. First, there is no evidence that the topics of *eleutheria* and of that which depends on us were connected in any way before Epictetus. Second, there is no reason to believe that *the early Stoics* thought their concept of that which depends on us to be in any way deficient, or to be founded on an illusion. Rather, it seems that the early Stoics (and the other Hellenistic philosophers) did not have a concept of freedom of the will or of freedom of decision. Third there is no parallel in Hellenistic times to the English ambiguity of 'freedom', as freedom of decision and freedom from hindrances and political freedom; there was no *one* word in early Stoicism that covered these various meanings. Fourth, and, most importantly, the debate over fatalism, determinism and that which depends on us assigned the concept of that which depends on us a special function: namely to guarantee the possibility of moral responsibility, of purposeful action, of a legal system, etc. The concept of that which depends on us was considered *the* most important necessary condition for these. The early Stoic concept of *eleutheria*, with its restriction to wise people, and being in the first instance 'freedom from' and not connected with the origination of intention and action, obviously could not and never was meant to fulfil this function.[56] Hence, not only is there no evidence that any Stoic thought of *eleutheria* as an ersatz for the 'lost' freedom of that which depends on us in the debate of determinism; we should find it surprising if any Stoic had suggested this. For they would have suggested using a completely different concept, fulfilling a different function, in a different part of Stoic philosophy, and referred to by a different term, in order to make up for the lack of things depending on us. Obviously, such a suggestion would have been quite without point or philosophical motivation.[57]

4. LATER ANTIQUITY

The story of Stoic freedom does not end with Epictetus. In Alexander of Aphrodisias' treatise *On Fate* another Stoic compatibilist theory is discussed, a theory that most probably originates from the first half of the 2nd century AD, and which was presumably defended by a contemporary of Alexander.[58] Let me begin with a remark about a change in terminology in Greek texts of which we have the first traces shortly after Epictetus. In Alexander, and generally from the end of the second century onwards we repeatedly find the locutions *to eph' hēmin* and *eleutheron* closely connected: in particular the adjectival expression *eleutheros* is predicated of *to eph' hēmin*[59] But in these passages *eleutheros* no

prompts Long to wonder why 'this ⟨Stoic⟩ concept of freedom ⟨i.e. *eleutheria*⟩ was not attacked by critics of Stoic determinism' (*ibid.* 175).

[56] One may remember that it was in particular bad actions and errors for which responsibility had to be secured; see Gellius VII 2.4–14.

[57] This is not to deny that *modern* philosophers have tried, in various ways, to substitute concepts of freedom similar to Stoic *eleutheria* for concepts of 'undetermined freedom of decision'.

[58] Cf. e.g. D. Frede, 'The dramatisation of determinism: Alexander of Aphrodisias' "De fato"', *Phronesis* 27 (1982) 276–7.

[59] In Alexander *fat* 188.21 we read in the context of that which depends on us *to eleutheon te kai autexousion* and in 189.10 *einai to eph' hēmin eleutheron te kai autexousion*: in Nemesius, *nat hom* 36.26–37.1 *eleutheron gar ti kai autexousion to logikon*, in 105.24 *eleutheron gar einai dei ta eph' hēmin*. *Eleutheros* in this meaning occurs only in Justin, e.g. *apol* I 43; in Tatian *orat ad Graec* 7; in Plotinus *enn* VI 8.4–6; in Bardesanes, in Eusebius *PE* 336 etc. The term *autexousion*, which we encounter already a few times in Epictetus (see above), comes to be another near-synonym of *to eph' hēmin*. It becomes quite common in the 3rd century AD, and in Nemesius' time it seems to have taken over from *to eph' hēmin*, cf. e.g. Nemesius, *nat hom* 112.7: *peri tou eph' hēmin, ho esti peri tou autexousiou*. *Autexousion* occurs several times in Alexander (*fat* 188.21, 189.10, 196.10),

longer has anything to do with the early Stoic or the Epictetan special, moral sense of the word (see above). This means that despite this later near synonymy of the expressions *eleutheros* and *eph' hēmin*, there is still no evidence that the Stoic concept of *eleutheria* played a role in the debate about the compatibility of fate and the kind of freedom that is required for moral responsibility.

The Stoic compatibilist position that we find in Alexander's treatise *On Fate* undoubtedly stands in the Chrysippean tradition. Like Chrysippus these Stoics are concerned with the compatibility of causal fate-determinism with moral responsibility. However, although the Stoic position seems to have remained by and large the same, the focus of discussion has once more shifted. It appears that now, for the first time, the discussion involves a concept of freedom of decision and an awareness of the problem of the compatibility of such freedom and causal determinism. Chrysippus had defended the compatibility of causal determinism and that which depends on us by maintaining that different people react to comparable impressions in different ways, and that because of that acts of assent and actions depend on the people themselves. At the same time they are causally determined by fate, which simply acts through these people. In Alexander, the Stoic position on causal determinism has been refined: it is now set out in terms of the idea of counterfactual situations. We encounter a new physical principle which has been introduced in order to back up the principle that every event has preceding causes (*fat* 192.22–25). The new principle states that under the same circumstances the same cause will necessarily bring about exactly the same effect.[60] For the special case of human assent and action this means: in the same situation the same incoming impression in the same person with the same state of soul will elicit the same reaction. If – in a certain situation – a person gives assent to an impression, then that person would also give assent to that impression in any otherwise identical situation. We now also find a Stoic account or definition of that which depends on us: it is that which happens through us, i.e. via our assent to impressions and the subsequent intention to act (*fat* 182.12–13;16). This definition is in keeping with Stoic causal fate-determinism.

The position of the – Peripatetic – critics of the Stoics in Alexander differs from that of Chrysippus' opponents. These Peripatetics are proponents of indeterminist freedom. (One could think of them as the ancient variety of libertarians.) They provide accounts of that which depends on us which differ from the Stoic one and which are similar to that of the modern concepts of metaphysical freedom and of freedom of decision. They state that

> ... 'depending on us' is predicated of the things of which we have in us the ability to choose also the opposite. (*fat* 181.5–6; cf. 181.12–14)

and that

> ... those things depend on us of which we seem to be masters of their being done and of their not being done (*fat* 169.13–15; cf 181.12–14, 199.8–9, 211.31–33).

Thus first, in some formulations of the account, the stress is now on choosing to do something, not simply on doing it. Second, the power of doing or choosing *alternative*

in Bardesanes (in Eusebius *PE* 337, 340, 342), in Origen (*princ* III 1.5), in Justin and Tatian (*loc.cit.*); Eusebius (*PE* 334.13–14) and Tertullian (*an* 21.6) treat it as a technical term.

[60] ἀδύνατον εἶναι, τῶν αὐτῶν ἀπάντων περιεστηκότων περί τε τὸ αἴτιον καὶ ᾧ ἐστιν αἴτιον, ὁτὲ μὲν δὴ μὴ οὑτωσί πως συμβαίνειν, ὁτὲ δὲ οὕτως. ἔσεσθαι γὰρ, εἰ οὕτως γίνοιτο, ἀναίτιόν τινα κίνησιν. (*fat* 192.22–25). Cf. Alexander *fat* 185.7–9 and Nemesius *nat hom* 105.18–21.

courses of actions seems essential to this account.[61] And third, these Peripatetic libertarians require expressly that the choice or action has to be independent of preceding causes

> we have this power of choosing the opposite and not everything that we choose has pre-determining causes, because of which it is not possible for us not to choose this. (*fat* 180.26–8, cf. *mant* 174.3–12)

These preceding causes include not only the external circumstances, but also the disposition of the agent's soul or the agent's character (*fat* 199.27–200.7): Alexander stresses that there are situations in which people can act or choose against their dispositions or character;[62] this implies that he distinguished between a person that chooses, and that person's character or set of dispositions.

Thus the debate has moved to a related but different problem of compatibility. The new conflict is this: the determinists claim that every change in the world is causally predetermined. The same cause, under the same circumstances will necessarily bring about the same effect. On the other hand, for the libertarians, the claim that there are things that depend on us now has come to mean: some changes in the world are not causally predetermined; these include human choices or decisions. In the very same situation, we, the very same causes, could decide one time one way, another time another way, undetermined by preceding external and internal factors. The question then is: how can I myself be said to make a decision, if there are causes prior to my decision by which it is predetermined which way I decide (*fat* 180.26)? This is the problem of the compatibility of – indeterminist – freedom of decision and causal determinism. There is no solution to this conflict: causal determinism and partial causal indeterminism are mutually exclusive. For the libertarian, decisions are either uncaused, or – more commonly – caused by the person, soul or will, who decides, and who in turn is causally independent from previous states of the world. (This is sometimes called agent causality.) This concept of freedom and the related concept of that which depends on us are very different from those the early Stoics and their opponents dealt with.[63] Note that with the development of this new problem of compatibilism, the relation between freedom and morality has also changed. The opponents of the Stoics now consider their freedom of decision as a necessary condition for moral responsibility; and correspondingly now accuse the Stoics of not preserving freedom of decision and of thus destroying moral responsibility (e.g. *fat* 190.1–19).

The Stoics do not give up at this point. However their strategy is not to attempt to show that their causal fate-determinism is compatible with the Peripatetic concept of that which depends on us, i.e. the concept of free decision, based on metaphysical freedom.

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[61] Note again the following difference between the Stoic and Peripatetic accounts. For the Peripatetics, as for Aristotle, if an action is *eph' hēmin*, so is its opposite. For the Stoics this does not hold: only the actions which we actually perform are *eph' hēmin*; only they happened through us. However, for Stoics and Peripatetics alike, if something is *eph' hēmin*, then it is possible, and its opposite is possible, too (see the section on modalities above). However we have no reason to believe that Aristotle maintained, as these Peripatetics did, that there were actions that are independent of preceding causes.

[62] One may of course doubt the consistency of his position in this respect.

[63] It combines two features: the first is that of indeterminism, i.e. the freedom from previous states of the world, including the agent; the second feature is that of active causation of the action or decision by the agent. The element of indeterminism alone also covers chance events. The element of self-causation is unique to beings that have some faculty of self-causation, e.g. a will, a faculty of assent, or of choice etc.

Instead, they take the offensive and set out to show that the Peripatetic concept of that which depends on us is unacceptable in that rather than preserving moral responsibility, in certain cases it actually makes it impossible to attribute praise and blame to an agent. And – as is implied – they hold that ethics rather requires a concept of that which depends on us as is propagated by themselves. That is, the debate now focuses on the question of *which is the right concept of that which depends on us.* (This question was, as far as I can see, not discussed in Chrysippus' time.) In outline the Stoic argument against their opponents' concept of that which depends on us runs as follows (cf. Alexander *fat* 196.24–197.3).[64] Someone who is truly virtuous does not[65] have the ability to be vicious, which is the opposite of being virtuous (and hence presumably also lacks the ability to act viciously). So someone who is virtuous does not have the ability to be the opposite of what they are (and to do the opposite of what they do). But virtuous people are praised for being virtuous. And accordingly, their being virtuous (and presumably their acting virtuously) is assumed to depend on them.[66] Hence the account of that which depends on us as 'that of which we can do the opposite' must be wrong. This argumentation implies that for the attribution of moral responsibility it is not essential to have the ability to act differently (or choose otherwise) in the very same circumstances. What *is* essential – according to the Stoics – is that it is oneself who acts, that one's action is performed as the result of an act of assent (*fat* 182.16–18, which for them presupposes that the agent is a rational being), and which in turn is based on the state or disposition of one's soul. Thus it is a concept of that which depends on us like the Stoic one that is needed for the attribution of moral responsibility. And this concept fits in with Stoic causal determinism – as Chrysippus had already shown.

In conclusion, these later Stoics no longer simply endeavour to show (as Chrysippus did) the compatibility of causal fate-determinism with some undefined, presupposed, concept of that which depends on us. Rather, they attempted to show that the concept of freedom of decision as introduced by contemporary Middle-Platonists or Peripatetics is not suitable as a basis for moral responsibility; whereas their – that is the Stoic – concept is suitable as a basis for moral responsibility, and hence as a basis for a system of ethics.

The Queen's College, Oxford

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[64] R. W. Sharples, *Alexander of Aphrodisias* (London 1983) 159 entertains the idea that this argument is not Stoic, but produced by Alexander himself. However, this seems unlikely to me, since (i) the argument is introduced as one of the arguments about which the opponents (of the Peripatetics) are most confident, and since (ii) the definition of that which depends on us used in the argument is not one of those Alexander uses otherwise in the *de fato*, but a presumably earlier one, which we know also from Nemesius *nat hom* 114.21–24.

[65] The Greek has μηκέτ', 'no longer (able to be vicious / virtuous)' (*fat* 196.27, 29). Perhaps Alexander slighly misrepresented the Stoic argument, which may have claimed only 'inasmuch as they are virtuous / vicious they are not able to act viciously / virtuously', cf. Stough (n. 37) 208–213. Alternatively, the argument may be *ad homines*, against the Peripatetics, cf. Sharples (n. 64) 160.

[66] This is, at least, the Peripatetic view, cf. Aristotle, *NE* III.5.