

# A History of Philosophy

## 16 Stoicism

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Let's get our attention back, shall we, to the Hellenistic philosophies. Last time we were on Epicureanism, with its beginnings, as far as the hedonistic ethic is concerned, in the ancient Cyrenaics. And then with the addition of Democritus' atomism, materialistic metaphysics, developing the distinctively Epicurean philosophy, which, as we noted, was going to have a resurgence and considerable attention in modern times when the scientific revolution of the Renaissance abandoned the Pythagorean and Aristotelian approaches to science, with formal causes and final causes.

The scientific revolution left simply matter, material cause, efficient cause, natural forces, and that is what made Democritus attractive, because it sounded very much like Democritus' idea. So Epicureanism is going to figure later on. Something similar can be said of Stoicism, also of Hellenistic scepticism, also of Neoplatonism.

Those, in fact, are the four main Hellenistic philosophies, and every one of them has far-reaching influence later in the history of thought. So it's important at this stage to get a good handle on what they are. Stoicism, I was commenting last time about its roots, where the starting point in terms of the Stoic ethic is in the attitude of the ancient cynics, particularly their detachment from externals, external comforts, external troubles.

In an attempt to get back to nature, to live in harmony with nature, in a simple sort of way. Now, I think that in that, the two key themes carried over into Stoicism are, one, detachment from external circumstances. Detachment from external circumstances.

And secondly, living in harmony with nature. Living in harmony with nature. The outcome is that in the Stoic ethic, as such, the main virtue which they sought, the good that they sought, was known as *apatheia*.

And yes, it's from that term that we get *apathetic*. Get the note of indifference. *Apatheia*.

*Apatheia*, literally, the alpha privative and then the noun, is freedom from passion. Having no emotional upset. Detachment in that sense is an emotional detachment from the external circumstances.

It was said of the Roman slave Epictetus, who subsequently became one of the Stoic philosophers, that his slave master, one time, was molesting him physically, viciously

twisting his leg, to which he complained, " You're going to break it. And he did break it. And without any further ado, Epictetus apparently limped for the rest of his life.

Detachment from such bodily circumstances. Now, whether the story is true or apocryphal, it illustrates the point. Reminds me of the time when I was, some years ago, sitting in the dentist's chair while the dentist was doing what dentists sadistically love to do.

And when he had my mouth nicely filled with his gear, he asked what I taught. And when, in between gurgles, I told him what, he drilled a little bit more, and when he got an appropriate neural response, asked, I wonder what a Stoic would say now. Detachment from, you see.

I wasn't in a condition to tell him I wasn't a Stoic. I can explain why. But, alright, the Stoic attitude.

But there's more to it than simply a matter of emotional detachment. Because this supreme good, *apatheia*, can be achieved by the rational control of the passions. By the rational control of the passions.

Now, this is going to be a theme that we're going to hear a lot of. Oh, in a way, it's anticipated in Plato, where it's the intellect that has to eventually control the appetites, you see. But as we get into modern times with people like Descartes and Spinoza, you'll find this theme again, to the effect that an emotion, a passion, is a confused idea.

And when intellect, reason, is able to get a clear and distinct idea of what's really going on, then that clarity of thought dispels all emotion. Reason controls the passions. By its clarity of understanding.

Now, that I think has, very plainly, its roots in the Stoics. Because the Stoics were not simply shutting their eyes to problems. Pain.

They saw particular circumstances as part of the world order. That is to say, as a logical part, a rational part, an intelligible part, of the rule of law throughout the natural world. And if the adversity that comes to you comes as a result of the operations of natural law, then after all, what can you do about it? Seeing that clearly, you're in a position to accept it.

To gain a rational detachment from it. And to try in the future to order your own life in harmony with nature and natural law. You see.

So the idea of *apatheia* is tied to the notion of ordering your life in harmony with the natural order. With the laws of nature. Consequently, it follows that not only

emotional upset, but moral evil is basically due to being out of harmony with natural law.

Moral evil is due to our irrational impulses. Like the pursuit of pleasure. Greed.

Anxiety. Fear. You see, and under those impulses, we tend to act in the face of circumstances in ways that are contrary to nature.

That phrase, contrary to nature, you see, stands in contrast to harmony with nature. Contrary to nature in harmony with nature. And moral evil is what is contrary to nature.

Sin against nature. Something unnatural. The practice of stoicism was, in a way, almost like a religion.

The term nature was roughly synonymous with the term God. But an impersonal God. A kind of pantheism is what is involved.

A kind of pantheism. And here we begin to get into the philosophy of nature as such. Nature is one.

One unified whole. And under the influence of Heraclitus, it is one whole with two aspects. Two ways in which we can think of it.

In fact, the terms nature and God seem to indicate those two ways. Because if we think of nature as simply an inert substratum of matter, then that implies something passive. Something that is ordered but doesn't do the ordering.

On the other hand, if we speak of God, that suggests something active. Which is not so much acted on but acts and does the ordering of nature. So you have two aspects, if you like.

One passive and one active. And the active one is, of course, the rational one. The passive is simply materiality.

The material existence, which is ordered. Now, it's this God, this active side of nature, which is the focus. And which gets to be spoken of as Logos.

And so I call this a Logos philosophy. A Logos philosophy of nature. That is to say, the active force is this cosmic reason.

Anaxagoras called it nous, mind. Heraclitus called it Logos. The Stoics sometimes speak of it as God or Providence.

Meantime, the material processes of nature involve the four elements with cycles of orderedness and fiery conflagration. Cyclical kind of cosmology. Nature, with its ordered processes, is therefore a deterministic kind of grid.

So that natural laws are causal forces at work in nature. Causal forces of an ordered sort, of a uniform sort, regular and intelligible. And as with other Greeks, so it is with human nature, that we find the two aspects of nature in human beings again.

We ordinarily think of them as body and soul. One passive, the other active. And the soul is spoken of as the Logos.

Yes, as in fact a seed of the Logos. The Logos spermaticos is the phrase they use. A seminal kind of Logos.

Is the living soul of a living thing. It pervades the body, giving it ordered activities and motion. So that this seed of the divine Logos, which is the human soul, operates through eight means.

The five physical senses. Our reproductive powers. Our thinking.

And our speech. The five senses, plus sex, thought, and speech. All of these, then, are the living activities made possible by the seminal Logos.

Now, one interesting note here is that the Stoics regard the soul, this life force, as being itself a material thing. Not immaterial, but material. And that's perfectly understandable when you consider that they're equating nature with God.

And seeing nature as composed of the four elements. That is to say, if the cosmic Logos is the totality of nature, and the totality of nature is composed of the four elements, you'll see. And if the human soul is a seed of that cosmic Logos, then it too is going to be composed of elements.

It too is going to be material. Now, that means that in reproduction, which is one of the activities of the Logos, soul and body are reproduced together. So that's what you have is known in later theological language as Traducianism.

The notion that the soul is transmitted with the body from father to child. Now, the way in which they understood it then is simply that the offspring are contained in miniature in the father's seed. The offspring in miniature contain soul as well as body, which, when deposited in a warm place, proceed to grow to childhood and adulthood.

This is what in biology gets to be known as Animalculism. Animalculism, which was one view of genetics intermittently because of stoic influence, in subsequent years

emerged again, in the 18th century, and late 18th century, with the beginnings of biology, and was really only eclipsed with the gradual development of modern genetics. But this Stoic view provided some early Christian theologians with a way of accounting for the origin of the human soul.

We'll be noticing shortly that the church father Tertullian, who said more anti-philosophical things than I think most of the rest of the church fathers put together, was very much indebted to Stoicism in a number of regards. But in this regard, it was he in particular who adopted this view of the soul and the transmission of the soul, Traducianism, and as a result, transmitted Traducianism into subsequent theology. Interestingly, and you still find it in some theology texts, it was somehow or other detached from its original biological basis, but you still find it occasionally.

Now the soul, then, being a material thing, is transmitted in that way, and the early Stoics did at least conceive of its surviving death by being reunited with the world soul, with the cosmic logos. Okay, and I guess one other thing in this general context of the logos philosophy is the bearing of the logos doctrine on epistemology, human knowledge. The Stoics, as you gather from their materialism, reject any notion of immaterial transcendent forms, any kind of Platonic or Aristotelian forms, for that matter.

All that exists is particulars with various size and composite natures. Everything comes from particulars; there's nothing else. So then, as far as human knowledge is concerned, knowledge derives from impressions, sense impressions, that we have of particulars.

So that the ordered causal processes of nature produce these impressions on the consciousness. Impressions on what? In consciousness, which is, apart from these impressions, what they called *tabula rasa*, a blank tablet, like a blank tablet of wax, on which a seal makes an impression, or a blank piece of paper, on which a marker makes an impression. So the mind is blank at birth.

Notice that differs from Plato, who claimed we had innate knowledge. It differs from Aristotle, who talked of potential intellect. Not blank, but loaded with capacity.

You see. For the Stoics, we are the passive recipients of sense impressions, the *tabula rasa*. And from those sense impressions, we develop our own ideas, so that impressions lead to the development of ideas.

Now, the result of this is a representational theory of knowledge. That is to say, the mind, the consciousness, is so affected by outside forces that impressions develop, which lead to the development of ideas. And these are representations of whatever external object it is that produced impressions.

Now, this becomes, again, in Renaissance times, and with this materialistic metaphysics, this becomes the standard theory of knowledge transmitted into 17th and 18th century philosophy in Britain and on the continent of Europe. In the intro, you probably met it in Descartes, for whom there were ideas that purportedly represent things external to us. In John Locke, empirical ideas represent things external to us.

And both Descartes and Locke are very explicit that the direct object, the immediate object of the consciousness, is not an external object, a material thing. What you're aware of, you're aware of in your mind, your idea. You see? Your ideas.

And the sense impressions. That's what you're aware of. This immediately opens up the huge question for 18th-century epistemology.

If all I know is my ideas, how do I know there's anything out there like the ideas? How can we know that material objects exist? How can we know that other minds exist? How can we know that God exists? If all we know, in a direct apprehension, are our own ideas. And so that kind of question, then, is implicit in this Stoic epistemology. It led them to look for a criterion of truth.

A criterion to ensure that the ideas are indeed correct representations. And the criterion they came up with was that the ideas must have clarity and distinctness. It is an intuitive test.

Those ideas that are so clear and so distinct as to be beyond doubt. They are irresistible ideas. Those we can take to be true.

Irresistible ideas. Oh, it's not that we unreflectively, immediately see that it's clear and distinct. But upon reflection, upon scrutiny, we realize, yeah, this is indeed a clear and distinct understanding that I have.

And that is the hallmark of truth. Well, if that sounds like an anticipation of what you may have learned earlier about Descartes, it is. The very language, clear and distinct ideas, is also Descartes' language.

So it's an influential notion, beginning back there in the stones. Okay, so we have the roots, the ethics, and the philosophy of nature. Now, what I'd like to do is to look at the selections that we have in Kaufman.

And let you see some of the significant things in that. The three selections we have, two of them, Zeno and Cleanthes, begin on 467. Zeno and Cleanthes represent the early period of Greek Stoicism from the 2nd century BC.

Epictetus later on in Roman skepticism. And it was characteristic of the Roman skeptics that they, well, Roman philosophy generally, developed a much more cosmopolitan outlook than did many of the Greeks. So that they extended the notion of a world order to include, well, the whole inhabited world as a world order, you see.

And in their political thinking, some of them like to think of the whole inhabited world as the Roman world. And Roman law is the embodiment of this logos order, you see. But that's the later Roman Stoicism, which was significantly more humanitarian, and much less, what, counter-culture, much less anti-establishment, than certainly than the Cynics and some of the earlier Stoics.

Okay, Zeno, page 467. Notice the themes about natural law. An animal's first impulse, say the Stoics, is to self-preservation because nature endears it to itself.

There's a natural law of self-preservation evident in animals. And half a dozen lines later, it wasn't likely that nature should estrange the living thing from itself. We're forced to conclude that nature, in constituting the animal, made it near and dear to itself, as if nature knew what it was doing.

Sure, it does. It's a logos nature, you see. The next paragraph is for the assertion made by some that pleasure is the object of the first impulse of animals.

It's been shown by the Stoics to be false. Because pleasure, they declare, is a by-product which never comes until nature has found the means suitable for continued existence. In other words, once you get self-preservation, then you can pursue pleasure.

And so, halfway down that second column, in the case of animals, impulse has been added, whereby they're unable to go in quest of their proper food element. For them, say the Stoics, nature's rule is to follow the direction of impulse. But when reason, by way of a more perfect leadership, has been bestowed on beings we call rational, for them, life according to reason rightly becomes the natural life.

Reason supervenes to shape impulse. Scientifically, says the translation. Yes, by its knowledge.

To shape impulse by knowledge. Reason rules emotion, passion, and impulse. On top of the next page, this is why Zeno was the first to designate as the end, life in agreement with nature, which is the same as a virtuous life.

Kleanthes, living virtuously, is equivalent to living in accordance with the actual course of nature. Harmony with nature. Then, the little paragraph towards the bottom, by the nature with which our life ought to accord, Chrysippus, so you've got

Zeno, Kleanthes, and Chrysippus, who were the three major Greek Stoics, Chrysippus understands both universal nature, and more particularly, the nature of man.

And you notice the last line in that paragraph, without adding the nature of the individual. Yes, because individual nature may be distorted by passion, and so forth. Then, virtue, he holds, is a harmonious disposition, choice-worthy for its own sake, intrinsically good, not from hope or fear of any external motive, indifferent to externals.

So, the ethic is going to be a thoroughly deontological one, an ethic of what I ought to do, what natural law requires, what my duty is, rather than an ethic of desired consequences from the external world. An approach to ethics we'll see a lot more of later. Top of the second column, when a rational being is perverted, it's due to the deceptiveness of external pursuits, sometimes to the influence of associates.

The starting points of nature are never perverse. Sure, your roommate may be perverse, the external pursuits of Friday night may be perverse, but not those of the natural order. On the next page, right in the middle of it, notice these lines.

Pleasure is an irrational elation at accruing what seems to be choice-worthy. Yeah, there's a difference between appearance and reality. Pleasure may appear to be choice-worthy, but it's not.

It's a fringe benefit, not something to be chosen for its own sake. So, right across from the next column, so they say, the wise man is passionless, apatheia, because he's not prone to fall into such infirmity. They add in that, in another sense, the term apatheia is applied to the bad man, meaning he's callous and relentless.

Now that's the wrong sense of apatheia, callous. Well, that ethical section, I think, captures it rather well. The section on physics that follows on 470, concerning nature.

Similarly, notice the last paragraph on 470. There are two principles in the universe, the active and the passive. Get that paragraph? The passive principle is substance, matter.

The active is reason, God. He is everlasting, the artificer of the several things throughout the whole extent of matter. Then, halfway down the first column on 471, God is one and the same with reason, noose, lagas, called by many other names.

In the beginning, he was by himself, and he transformed the whole of substance through air into water and so forth. God, who is the seminal reason of the universe, what your soul is to you as an individual, a seminal lagas, that is, as it were, the seed

plot, the rational plan for you and your life. So God is to the whole future of the cosmos as he is to order.

So God, who is the seminal reason of the universe, remains behind in the moisture as such an agent adapting matter to himself with a view to the next stage of creation. Notice the figure of speech of a seed that germinates. You see, I find it a very vivid one.

A week ago, I sowed some grass seed, and I'm now keeping the ground moist. And at lunchtime I noticed the first signs of green grass coming up through the moist dirt, you see. The seminal lagas bearing fruit is the way in which that analogy is applied in the Stoics, you see.

God is the seed, the seminal lagas for what's going to be. Your soul is likewise. And then in the second column on 471, the last paragraph, the world in their view is ordered by reason and providence.

As reason pervades every part of it, so does the soul in us. Difference of degree in varying parts. The whole world is a living being endowed with soul and reason.

And on 473, that continues at the very bottom of 473, the substance of God is the whole world, the heavens. So forth. And 476, the first complete paragraph, talks of the eight parts of the soul.

And then the last line in that first column on 476 gets the traducianism going. Semen is, by them, defined as that which is capable of generating offspring like the parent. The human semen emitted by a parent in a moist vehicle is mingled with parts of the soul in the same ratio as they were present in the parent.

And so the child, then, body and soul, is derived from the parent. Well, that's the Logos philosophy of nature pretty clearly. Now, one thing more.

I want to look at this Cleanthes Hymn to Zeus that follows. The translator of this, I'm convinced, must have been familiar with the King James Version and probably the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. Because it's translated using some of the idioms of classic Western Christianity.

But that very translation helps you to see why Stoicism had at least an initial appeal to Christian thought. Okay? Now, it sounds like a hymn. It's called a hymn.

O God most glorious, called by many a name, Nature's great king, through endless years the same, Omnipotence, who by thy just decree controlest all. Now, you see, that could have been in some Christian hymn. Hail, Zeus! For unto thee behoves thy creatures in all lands to call.

Zeus, he said, is one of the names used. We are thy children, we alone, of all on earth's broad way. We are thy children.

On earth's broad way that wander to and fro, Bearing thine image. Yes, the Logos Birmaticus is the image of the world Logos. Bearing thine image, whereso'er we go.

What is that image? Reason. Yes, and thanks in part to Stoic influence, that's what early Greek Christian theology thought the image of God was. Reason.

Bearing thine image, whereso'er we go. Wherefore, with songs of praise, thy power I will forth show. Lo, yonder heaven that round the earth is wheeled, follows thy guidance, still to thee doth yield glad homage.

Thine unconquerable hand, such flaming minister, the leavened brand, wieldeth a sword, two-edged, Whose deathless might pulsates through all that nature brings to like. Now, this vehicle of the universal word, that flows through all, there it is, the pervasive Logos, And in the light celestial glows of stars both great and small, the heavens the same as the earth, A king of kings through ceaseless ages, God whose purpose brings to birth what air on land or in the sea is wrought or in high heavens immensity, Save what the sinner works infatuate, don't blame God for that. Nay, but thou knowest to make crooked straight, chaos to thee in order, In thine eyes the unloved is lovely, who didst harmonize things evil with things good, That there should be one word, one Logos, through all things everlastingly, all things working together for good.

One word, whose voice alas the wicked spurn, insatiate for the good their spirits yearn, there's the passion, Seeing that they see not, neither hearing hear God's universal law, Which those revere by reason guided, happiness, who when? The rest, unreasoning, diverse shapes of sin, self-prompted follow. For an idle name, there's passion, vainly they wrestle in the lists of fame, Others with other passions inordinately riches woo, or dissolute the joys of flesh pursue, Now here, now there they wander fruitless still, forever seeking good and finding ill, Zeus the old bountiful, whom darkness shrouds, Whose lightning lightens in the thunder clouds, thy children save from error's deadly sway, From error's deadly sway, I think that should be known, From error's deadly away, turn thou the darkness from their souls away, Those two should be reversed, shouldn't it? From error's deadly sway, turn the darkness from their souls away, Thou'lt safe that unto knowledge they attain, for thou by knowledge art made strong to reign, Logos, All things rulest righteously, so by thee honored we will honor thee, Praising thy works continually with songs as mortal should, Nor higher mead belongs e'en to the gods, than justly to adore the universal law, Universal Logos, forevermore. Okay, Stoicism.

Reaction? You see its attraction? Think of Hellenistic times. It was a time of cultural and political upheaval throughout the ancient world. The Greek city-states had given way to Alexander's empire, which fragmented like the Soviet Union at his death, and eventually was overcome by the Roman Empire.

So that historic loyalties and roots just confused, jumbled, Roman citizenship extended, but historic roots, religious and otherwise, just dissolving. It's a vast mix-up. So that in the Hellenistic age, they were looking literally from, what? Freedom from trouble in the mind and freedom from pain in the body and trouble in the mind? Freedom from passionate concern and involvement in those externals of life? And here's the philosophical justification of it.

A kind of salvation. Do you follow the thinking? Questions? Yeah. That'll come out pretty plainly, I think.

Not necessarily right now, some of it will now, but there's a sense in which the history of thought provides its own built-in critique of what went before. In other words, the development of Christian thought both assimilated Stoic influences and repudiated Stoic influences. So as we trace that development, we'll see the critique develop.

It's not so much a matter of running away from pain, but disregarding questions of pain and pleasure. Self-interest is counted out. It's not a factor to consider.

It's not that there's anything wrong with pleasure, except that it can be a deceiver, a temptress. Why do we always say that in the feminine? I guess PC would be on our tails there. All right, a tempter.

No, not as... Well, wait a minute, the pain, yes. Insofar as there is pain, there is some disharmony. But if that is not something of our fault through having done something passionate and stupid, like overeating, for instance, then if there's nothing we can do about it, disregard it.

The Stoical attitude. What would a Stoic say now? A dentist's question. Do you mean what the underlying metaphysic is? The Logos Doctrine.

He's not saying we don't have the ability. You see, what is not innate? There is no innate knowledge. You see.

There is no innate structure to the mind. I'm getting now at the Aristotelian. There's no innate structure to the mind so that automatically we think in certain categories.

Remember the ten categories. You see. No, there isn't that sort of pre-arranged capacity.

Now, we have the capacity to think for ourselves, but we think for ourselves empirically, initially. You see. Empirical generalisation on the basis of collecting the experiences, the perceptions, developing empirical ideas, and seeing similarities.

You see. So generalisation, inference from generalisation. Yeah.

Laws of nature. What are they? Well, the word force is used. Forces.

That sounds like later mechanistic science. But basically, what we observe are simply regularities. Uniformities.

Order. You see. So it's our capacity to generalise and see through generalisation an overall order.

Seeing an overall order in which my present adverse circumstances are part. Why should I get so upset about it? You see. Why should I take it personally? So forth.

Well, let me say something about Christian responses, if I may, and we'll see more of this as we go along. I think the first thing to observe, and I'm looking for that page of notes. Here it is.

The first thing to observe is that the early Christians were very much impressed with the Stoic ethic. Now, I haven't read that selection from Epictetus to you. Take a look at it.

It's that sort of thing. And the ethical section from Zeno. It's that sort of thing which very much impressed early Christianity.

And Clement of Alexandria, in some of his writings, quotes, refers to, and praises the Stoics in regard to some of their moralising. Okay? I said some of their moralising. Not necessarily the underlying theory of the moralising.

Secondly, there was a very wide acceptance of this way; in general, this way of talking about the divine logos. Linking it up with the prologue in John's Gospel. They recognised that the Stoic logos was a logos of nature.

That John's logos is a logos of nature, of creation. By whom all things that are made, all things are made that are made. In the beginning was the logos.

The logos was God. And so they make that association. And then start building on that in the development of a Christian logos doctrine that we'll have to look at more closely.

It went in various ways. Tertullian, as I mentioned, adopted the Stoic view of the soul. One of the interesting things, and I'll come back to this later on, was that he was attracted to Stoicism in response to Gnosticism.

Now, ancient Gnosticism, G-N-O-S-T, ancient Gnosticism, as you know, was a kind of dualism. Matter is the source of evil. Reason, mind, the source of good.

Now, you see, the Stoics were saying that, yes, reason, mind, is good. But reason, mind, is material. So material, ordered by reason, is good.

So, in order to refute the Gnostics, what Tertullian does is to accept Stoic materialism. That is to say, if a material mind or soul can be good, then other matter can be good. And in the beginning, God said it was good, didn't he? And so you avoid the Gnostic dualism.

In that way. Well, that's not to say that that involved other problems. Tertullian, in that regard, was a minority voice.

Most of the early Christian thinkers, and we'll look at this a little bit more, in responding to Gnosticism, preferred a Platonic kind of view. But a Platonic kind of view that introduced the Stoic Logos Doctrine into Platonism. You see? So we'll be talking about the Middle Platonism in a few days.

The Middle Platonism, which combined the Stoic Logos Doctrine with some Pythagoreanism and some Platonism. And it was that which was adopted by the Christian school in Alexandria as its overall philosophical framework for doing theology and apologetics. And that which led later on into the development of Neoplatonism.

So, those Christian responses are pretty obvious. Now, the one remaining thing I want to draw your attention to is the fact that when Paul was in Athens on his second missionary journey, you remember he met with some of the Greek philosophers on Mars Hill and was told that these were, at least some of them, Epicureans and Stoics. Now, in the light of what you know about the Epicureans and Stoics, listen to what Paul said.

Okay? Men of Athens, I perceive that you are, in every way, very religious. Well, Stoicism, yes. King James translated superstitious, which would have been playing to the Epicurean crowd because they were against all kinds of superstition.

Remember? They wanted a down-to-earth materialism to free them from all of the fears that superstitious beliefs create. But just his introduction is intended to grab attention and identify with them. As I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found an altar with this inscription to the unknown God.

Now, anybody who would be drawing attention to an unknown God plainly would want to have some strong view of knowledge, like the Stoics. Ignorance is the source of problems. Unknown God.

What, therefore, you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. God, who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of Heaven and Earth, and any Stoic could agree with that, does not live in shrines made by men, and the Epicurean repudiation of religious superstitions could heartily agree with that, nor is he served by human hands as though he needed anything, seeing he gives to all men life and breath and everything. Life and breath, that's Lagos.

And everything. So he's playing two sets of music at the same time. Nor is he served by human hands, let's see, and he made from one every nation of men to live on the face of the Earth.

The one. The one. Lagos.

Every nation of men in the text of Roman times was talking of a world citizenship because of one Lagos. Having determined allotted periods and the bounds of their habitation, the ordered creation, that they should seek God in the hope that they might feel after him and find him. He's not far from any of us.

For, in him we live and move and have our being, as some of your prophets have said, for we are his offspring. That's from Pliny's Hymn to Zeus. I'm quoting Cleanthes' Hymn to Zeus, the Stoic poet.

Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold or silver or stone, a representation by the art and imagination of man. And the Epicureans are cheering at that one. The times of ignorance, God has overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent because he's fixed a day by which he will judge the world.

And, you know, the stoic had some idea of this cycle of destruction that's coming, by which he has given assurance in that he raised a man from the dead, has given assurance by raising him from the dead, and when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, they took a rain check. What Greek wants a resurrected body? An attitude of detachment for the Stoics. And the Epicureans wanted to turn off the whole notion of future life.

Too much to worry about if that's the case. Well, Paul obviously shows familiarity with the Stoic thing. How? Why? The city of Tarsus was one of the seats of Stoic philosophy, one of the major seats in the first century.

So Saul, apparently, grew up in a context where he would, growing up in town, have been acquainted with stoicism. Which acquaintance stood him in good stead? That sermon on Mars Hill has been taken by New Testament writers or New Testament commentators in a couple of different ways.

Some have said that when he left Athens and went to Corinth, he got down to brass tacks, determining to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified. That he gave up on addressing the intellectuals. Others disagree.

And I guess I'm inclined to disagree. He had two different audiences. He had an audience of intellectuals in Athens.

He went up Mars Hill, and it was quite a climb. He knew what he'd get there when he got there. He had people from all over the world visiting the brothels.

And the church was influenced by the moral climate of the town. So two different audiences, two different emphases. But at least, Paul's response is very plain, very perceptive.

His strategy, apparently, was to identify with fragments of truth that he saw in Stoicism and Epicureanism. But to recast them into a different context, restoring them to a true context. Now, that's precisely what later on Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria are going to say.

When they tell us that all truth is God's truth, no matter where it's found. And the task of the Christian is to regather these fragments and restore them to the body of the whole from which they have been stolen. Do you get it? That's where the notion of all truth is God's truth comes from, in this very context.