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The Use of the Stoic Concept of *Phronēsis* by Irenaeus and Lactantius

In this work, I discuss the use of the Stoic concept of *phronēsis* by Irenaeus and Lactantius in four steps. In the first part, I outline the Stoic concept of practical wisdom (*phronēsis*). The second chapter is devoted to the Stoic teaching on the necessary conjunction of either advantages and disadvantages of moral good and bad, closely related to the concept of *phronēsis*. Next, I expound on how Irenaeus, the bishop of Lyons (130–202) appropriated this Stoic doctrine in his main anti-heretical work. The final chapter concerns Lactantius, the Latin apologist (c. 250 – c. 325), and points out that both the Stoic concept of practical wisdom and the teaching on the necessary conjunction of good and bad form the center of Lactantius' conception of divine providence in his *Divine Institutes* and in the *Anger of God*.

1. The concept of *phronēsis* in the early Stoa

For Zeno, *phronēsis* is the most fundamental virtue of all, and other virtues constitute different aspects thereof.¹ In one sense, *phronēsis* is defined by the Stoics as *the science of what should and should not be done and of neutral actions, or the science of things that are good and bad and neutral as applied to a creature whose nature is social*.² This means that practical wisdom is related to the moral value of an act. According to another testimony of Stobaeus, *phronēsis*, as related to appropriate acts (*kathēkonta*), is the ability to distinguish between things which are in accordance with nature and those which are contrary to it.³ According to our sources, including Diogenes Laertius and Stobaeus, the early Stoics established these fundamental claims:

- 1) Only what one's happiness depends on, can be regarded as worthy of the names *good* or *bad*.
- 2) Your happiness cannot depend on things which you can lose against your will.
- 3) Consequently, only what you cannot lose against your will is worthy of the names *good* and *bad*, all the rest do not deserve this, but are to be labelled as indifferent (*adiaphoron*).⁴

1 Kerferd 1978.

2 Stob. 2. 59.

3 Stob. 2. 60.

4 DL 7. 101–103; Stob. 2. 79; *Fin.* 3. 6. 21; 3. 15. 50; *Acad.* 1. 10. 35ff.

From these claims it follows that what is really worthy of the names *good* and *bad* are virtue and vice, that is to say, the capacity to choose correctly or incorrectly. To choose between what? Between *things* of course, let us say, situations labelled as indifferent. Upon what grounds? Whether an indifferent thing is conforming or contrary to nature. As for the acts, morally good or perfect acts (*katorthōmata*) are those stemming from virtue, morally wrong acts are those stemming from vice, whereas the so-called appropriate acts (*kathēkhonta*) are those directed at indifferent situations which conform with nature or conform more than the rest. Consequently, *phronēsis*, as put in relation to appropriate acts is to be understood not only as the capacity between opposite moral values (good and bad), but also the capacity to decide about the moral value of an act to be done.

This latter understanding of *phronēsis* is corroborated by a passage of Plutarch's *Dialogue on Common Conceptions*. According to this text, the prudent (here we can find the adverb *phronimōs*) selection and the acceptance of the primary things conforming to nature is the goal, whereas the things themselves, and the obtaining of them, are not the goal but are given as a kind of *material having selective value*.⁵ The latter term intimates that the primary things conforming with nature serve as matter for the selection of practical wisdom. In my opinion, the two occurrences of the word "selection" indicate that not only things conforming with nature, but also things in contradiction with nature serve as a matter for this virtue. Being a matter for the selection might mean to be the object of selection for practical wisdom, and also to be an instrument for it to develop and be trained. Consequently, the primary things conforming with nature and, as it is implied in the text, those contrary to nature are the preconditions of the emergence and the functioning of practical wisdom. More explicit is in this respect a statement of Cicero in his *Dialogue on Moral Ends*: "But the primary objects of nature, whether they are in accordance with it or against, fall under the judgement of the wise person, and are as it were the subject and material of wisdom."⁶

From these texts, interpreted as I have suggested, we can conclude that for practical wisdom to expand and to exert itself both physical advantages and disadvantages are needed.

⁵ *Comm. Not.* 1071B.

⁶ *Fin.* 3. 18. 61: "Nam bonum illud et malum, quod saepe iam dictum est, postea consequitur, prima autem illa naturae sive secunda sive contraria sub iudicium sapientis et dilectum cadunt, estque illa subiecta quasi materia sapientiae."

2. The necessary conjunction of good and bad

2.1 *The necessary conjunction of physical advantages and disadvantages*

Our next question concerns the way in which physical disadvantages can contribute to training practical wisdom. Seneca in his work, *On Providence*, expounds that the experience of ills (so-called evils) is necessary for someone to become virtuous. He particularly focuses on endurance (*hyponomē*), a component of courage, the latter being a particular aspect of practical wisdom.

You are a great man, but how am I to know it, if fortune does not give you an opportunity of showing your virtue? [...] I may say to a good man, if no harder circumstance has given him the opportunity whereby alone he might show the strength of his mind, I judge you unfortunate because you have never been unfortunate; you have passed through life without an antagonist; no one will know what you can do, – not even yourself. For if a man is to know himself, he must be tested; no one finds out what he can do except by trying.⁷

From this the author draws a teleological conclusion:

God, I say, is favouring those he wants to attain to the highest possible excellence whenever he provides them the ground to perform a brave and courageous action [*materiam praebet aliquid animose fortiterque faciendi*], and for this purpose they must encounter some difficulty in life. God hardens, reviews, and disciplines those whom he approves, whom he loves.⁸

The way of expression *materiam praebet aliquid animose fortiterque faciendi* (provides them the material to perform a brave and courageous action) can remind us of the vocabulary of Plutarch and Cicero, who consider, as we could see, the primary things conforming with nature, and, at least implicitly, also those contrary to nature as material for practical wisdom. Thus we can say that the selective character of *phronēsis*, understood as relating to appropriate acts consists in having practice in deciding which disadvantages to endure under which circumstances. The flaws afflicting the would-be wise have the function of training his virtue. The last idea and the use of the sport metaphor may bring to mind someone's many references to Scripture, especially by Pauline Epistles.

For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.⁹

⁷ *Prov.* 4. 1–5.

⁸ *Prov.* 4. 8.

⁹ *Hebrews* 12:6. Translations are from the New English Bible.

An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.¹⁰

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.¹¹

2.2 *The necessary conjunction of vice and virtue*

A well-known text about the necessary conjunction of good and evil is Chrysippus' answer to the problem of theodicy in his work *On Providence*.¹² The argumentation of the Stoic philosopher was quoted and introduced by Gellius in a part of his *Attic Nights*, which itself was preserved by Lactantius, the Christian Apologist. According to Chrysippus, good and bad mutually depend on each other, and this holds particularly true for the opposite moral values, vice and virtue. This *phronēsis*, which is implicitly claimed here to be trained by the comparison between vice and virtue, is practical wisdom as a capacity to decide about the moral value of an act to be done. Gellius introduces the argument as directed against those who declare that “nothing is less consistent with Providence than the existence of such a quantity of troubles and evils in a world which He is said to have made for the sake of man.”¹³ The argument goes as follows:

There is absolutely nothing more foolish than those men who think that good could exist, if there were at the same time no evil. For since good is the opposite of evil, it necessarily follows that both must exist in opposition to each other, supported as it were by mutual adverse forces; since as a matter of fact no opposite is conceivable without something to oppose it. For how could there be an idea of justice if there were no acts of injustice? Or what else is justice than the absence of injustice? How too can courage be understood except by contrast with cowardice? Or temperance except by contrast with intemperance? How also could there be wisdom, if folly did not exist as its opposite? Therefore, said he, why do not the fools also wish that there may be truth, but no falsehood? For it is in the same way that good and evil exist, happiness and unhappiness, pain and pleasure. For, as Plato says, they are bound one to the other by their opposing extremes; if you take away one, you will have removed both.¹⁴

10 2 *Timothy* 2:5.

11 1 *Cor* 9. 24–25.

12 For the Stoic idea of interdependence of good and evil, see Long 1968.

13 Gellius 7. 1. 1.

14 Gellius 7. 1. 2–6.

The argument points to two kinds of interdependence or necessary conjunction. The first one is a logical interdependence, in the sense that none of these opposites *can be conceived* without comparison with the other. Let us label the second kind of interdependence pedagogical. This means that one cannot grasp the essence of one of these opposites without knowing something about the other. It is only through the understanding of vice that one comes to learn what virtue is. It is important to see that the necessary conjunction of moral good and evil works by the intermediary of physical disadvantages. That is to say, the intellectual progress leading to the learning of what virtue is goes through the disadvantages resulting from the vices of the other. This is clear both from Gellius' introduction to the quotation and from the following proposition: how could there be an idea of justice if there were no acts of injustice? This interdependence is a consequence of a third category of interdependence between acts of virtue and those of vice. This can be termed as metaphysical interdependence. Namely, nature can produce a kind of virtue only if it also produces the corresponding vice. Even the continuation of this text shows this, by setting forth the theory of necessary concomitances (*kata parakolouthesin*). But this third kind of interdependence is exposed more clearly in a passage of Plutarch's treatise *On Common Concepts*. The author quotes Chrysippus' treatise *On Nature*.

Vice is distinguished from dreadful accidents, for in itself it does in a sense come about in accordance with the reason of nature and, if I may put it so, its genesis is not useless in relation to the universe as a whole [...] While in a chorus, there is harmony if no member of it is out of tune and in a body health if no part of it is ill, for virtue, however, there is no coming to be without vice; but just as snake's venom or hyena's bile is a requisite for some medical prescriptions so the depravity of Meletus is in its way suited to the justice of Socrates and the vulgarity of Cleon to the nobility of Pericles.¹⁵

This interdependence of vice and virtue might be in the background of such propositions as that in Plutarch's other treatise on Stoic self-contradictions, where we can read that "both all states of the soul, including vices and disorders, and movements of the soul, vicious acts, come about in conformity with the reason of nature."¹⁶

3. Irenaeus

Now, before examining the appropriation of this Stoic material in Lactantius' works, I will follow the adaptation of the Stoic concept of *phronēsis* and the teaching on logical,

¹⁵ *Comm. Not.* 1065A–B.

¹⁶ *St. Rep.* 1050D.

epistemological and metaphysical interdependence of good and evil by Irenaeus. The context of the argumentation of the latter in book 4 of his *Against Heresies* is one polemic against Gnostics who deny that free will – the cause of the fall – can be the gift of a God who is good, just, prescient and omnipotent. They blame, as the bishop of Lyons puts it, the God of the Christians, asking why he could not create all the angels and men as being incapable to commit any sins. According to Irenaeus’ account on their argumentation, the existence of a creature who is able to make a wrong choice by his will, contradicts the omnipotence of God. The exegetical starting point for the discussion is *Matthew*:¹⁷ “How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!”¹⁸. That is to say: how could the Jews resist the will of the real God?

Irenaeus’ response is as follows: “God has not coerced anybody, but he gave good council [*bonum consilium*/*gnómé agathé*] to everybody.”¹⁹ According to Irenaeus’ argumentation, if man did not act from free decision, (a) there would be no merit, (b) Biblical commandments and injunctions would not make any sense, and finally, Man would neither appreciate his own being good nor would understand what is really good.²⁰ Why? First, because the good can be appreciated only if one has to struggle for it. The struggle [*agōn*] makes the real value and meaning of the good. 2) In the end the essence of good can be seized only by knowing what is evil. These two arguments are connected to each other. The struggle for the good implies to Irenaeus the awareness (or experience) of the evil to resist. Thus, both the appreciation and the understanding of the good – in its really moral sense – necessitates the experience of evil.²¹ He develops the last point in the following way:

Since, then, this power [i.e. the free will] has been conferred upon us, both the Lord has taught and the apostle has enjoined us the more to love God that we may reach this [prize] for ourselves by striving after it. For otherwise, no doubt, this our good would be unknown [*anoēton*], because not the result of trial [*agymnaston*]. The faculty of seeing would not appear to be so desirable, unless we had known what a loss it were to be devoid of sight; and health, too, is rendered all the more estimable by an acquaintance with disease; light, also, by contrasting it with darkness; and life with death. Just in the same way is the heavenly kingdom honourable to those who have known the earthly one. But in proportion as it is more honourable, so much the more do we prize it; and if we have prized it more, we shall be the more glorious in the presence of God.²²

17 *Matthew* 23:37.

18 *Adv. Haer.* 4. 37. 1.

19 *Adv. Haer.* 4. 37. 1.

20 *Adv. Haer.* 4. 37. 6.

21 *Adv. Haer.* 4. 37. 7.

22 *Adv. Haer.* 4. 37. 7.

Irenaeus obviously points to the logical and the epistemological interdependence of virtue and vice, as we could read in Gellius' aforementioned text.²³ Virtue can be grasped only by comparison to vice. Without the *experience* of vice, the *good in us* is unknown, because it is not a result of training, namely, the training by evil. I cannot help remarking here that, in my view, at this point Irenaeus managed to seize something important, namely what the adjective "good" means in a truly moral sense. The moral goodness of an act does not only require accordance with a rule commonly accepted as moral, but it also necessarily implies the agent's striving for being capable to accomplish this act, rather than another which is wrong but seductive.

Now, let us turn back to the content of training by evil. Does it comprise to Irenaeus the temptation alone, or the sin itself? The continuation of the text seems to suggest the second answer by saying that in the process of formation (*paideia*) of man by God, both the apostasy of man and the long-suffering of God play an important role. To illustrate this idea, he quotes Jeremiah: "Your own apostasy shall correct you [*paideusei se hē apostasia sou*]." ²⁴ Irenaeus puts the question into the mouth of his opponents: "What then? Could not God have exhibited man as perfect from beginning?" ²⁵ God would have been capable of doing it – he replies – but man as a creation could not be perfect from the beginning. He must go through a process of growing up, the stages of which are childhood, adulthood – i.e. real human existence – and finally deification. Man thus had to come into existence as a child, who is still not a real man. He is bound to undergo a process of training in the course of which he is gradually made into God's image and after His likeness. Importantly, the church father adds that *the knowledge of good and evil* is a fundamental step in the process of man's growing up. ²⁶ The vocabulary deserves attention. As we read, man has *received* this knowledge (*agnitione accepta boni et mali*). To Irenaeus, moral good and evil, the knowledge of which is possible only by the comparison between them are obedience and disobedience to God, a pair of opposite moral values. This is the inner experience of disobedience, which is indispensable for grasping the essence and seizing the value of moral good, i.e. obedience. Wisdom in its first sense is this understanding. But we must notice that according to Irenaeus, the first sin was not in itself necessary for the education of man, but only as followed by punishment. This means that the process of education also comprehends the comparison between the states of man before and after the Fall, that is to say, immortality and mortality. From this it follows that wisdom lies not only in the comparison between moral good and evil, but also in the comparison

23 See Osborn 2001, 57.

24 Osborn 2001, 57.

25 *Adv. Haer.* 4. 38. 1.

26 *Adv. Haer.* 4. 38. 3.

between physical good and evil. In both cases, experience (*exercitatio/peira*) of one of the opposites is needed for the knowledge of the other and vice versa.

By way of an intermediary conclusion, we can make the following claims:

- (1) Irenaeus uses the Stoic idea that moral evil and good vice and virtue are epistemologically interdependent on each other.
- (2) He conceives, to some extent, the biblical concept of wisdom (i.e. knowledge of good and evil) on the model of the Stoic concept of practical wisdom in two aspects: a) as the ability to distinguish between moral good and evil (see the first kind of Stoic *phronēsis* related to morally perfect acts); and b) as the ability to distinguish between convenient and inconvenient things (see the second kind of Stoic *phronēsis* related to appropriate acts).

4. Lactantius

As early as in the first, shorter version of Lactantius' chief work, the *Divine Institutes*, we can meet a moderately dualistic system, according to which the moral development of man is provoked by the stratagems of Satan, not so clear whether created or begotten by God. These stratagems of this Evil Spirit especially include tortures and seduction. Lactantius quotes Seneca's aforementioned passage from the *De Providentia* and expounds in a number of places that adversities are indispensable for the development of endurance, the latter being the highest virtue. Below I provide two examples from two different books of the *Divine Institutes*.

The first steps in transgression do not thrust a man away from God and into punishment immediately: the purpose of evil is to test a man for virtue, because if his virtue is not stirred and strengthened by constant assault it cannot come to perfection; virtue is the brave and indomitable endurance of evils that have to be endured. Hence the fact that virtue cannot exist if it has no adversary.²⁷

Virtue either cannot be seen without the contrast of vice or is not perfected without the test of adversity. That is the gap that God wanted to have between good and bad, [or, following the manuscripts which contains the later, shorter version: Indeed, God wanted

²⁷ *Div. Inst.* 3. 29. 6: "Idcirco enim in primordiis transgressionis non statim ad poenam detrusus a Deo est, ut hominem malitia sua exerceat ad virtutem: quae nisi agitur, ni assidua vexatione roboretur, non potest esse perfecta; siquidem virtus est preferendorum malorum fortis ac invicta patientia." In other passages, this idea is connected with that of the imitation of Christ. As the apologist teaches, the incarnate Christ, exposed both to the same sufferings and passions, came to be the master of endurance for humankind. See *Div. Inst.* 4. 19. 11; 4. 24. 18.

good and bad to have that nature] so that we may know the quality of good from bad and likewise of bad from good: the nature of the one cannot be understood if the other is not there too. [When about to restore justice,] God did not exclude evil, in order that a reason for virtue could be constructed. How could endurance sustain its name and meaning if there were nothing we were forced to endure?²⁸

In the latter quotation we can see that our theologian combines the idea that, by way of training, adversities are needed for the development of endurance with that of the pedagogical interdependence of vice and virtue. In a passage of the longer, revised version of the *Divine Institutes*, Lactantius associates, as Irenaeus did, the Stoic notion of practical wisdom with the Biblical concept of wisdom. Here the apologist claims that man has experienced evil as a result of the fall and that he is therefore given the task of choosing between good and evil. In this text, it is in wisdom (*sapientia*), and not in virtue, that the ability to make the right choice lies. Here, wisdom is judged not to be able to exert itself without the existence of evil. As Lactantius teaches here, the first sin has an educative function, for it is due to the sin that man *was given* the knowledge of good and evil, that is, the ability to distinguish them.

Finally, knowledge of good and evil were given [*data est*] to the first man together. Once he had that knowledge [*qua percepta*], he was immediately banished from the holy place, where evil does not exist. He had been there in a context of good alone; he therefore did not know that it was good. Once he had received²⁹ [*accepit*] on the understanding of good and evil, however, it was wrong for him to remain in a place of bliss, and he was banished to this world we all share so that he could experience together the two things he had learnt together. It is thus plain that man was given [*datam esse*] wisdom in order to distinguish good from evil, benefit from disbenefit, and useful from useless, in order to exercise judgment and consideration of what he should beware and what he should seek, what to shun and what to pursue. Wisdom cannot therefore be established without evil. In the end, it may be said, man has to be both wise and blessed without any evil at all.³⁰

28 *Div. Inst.* 5. 7. 4–6: “Virtutem aut cerni non posse, nisi habeat vitia contraria, aut non esse perfectam, nisi exerceatur adversis. Hanc enim Deus bonorum ac malorum voluit esse distantiam [in manuscripts which contains the later, longer version the latter word is replaced by *naturam*], ut qualitatem boni ex malo sciamus, item mali ex bono, nec alterius ratio intelligi sublato altero potest. Deus ergo [in the later version we can read inserted here *iuitiam reducturus*] non exclusit malum, ut ratio virtutis constare posset. Quomodo enim patientia vim suam nomenque retineret, si nihil esset, quod pati cogere[mur]?” Cf. *Div. Inst.* 5. 22. 11–19.

29 Here I modified the translation by A. Bowen and P. Garnsey, who put “had taken”.

30 *Div. Inst.* 7. 5. 27. add. 10–12: “Denique boni malique scientia simul data est. qua percepta statim de loco sanctus pulsus est. in quo malum non est. Ubi cum esset in bono tantum id ipsum bonum esse ignorabat. Postquam vero accepit boni malique intelligentiam, iam nefas erat cum in beatitudinis loco morari, relegatusque est in hunc communem orbem, ut ea utraque simul experiretur, quorum naturam

Our author obviously follows Irenaeus at this point as well. He considers the knowledge of good and evil as a gift, and judges this gift to have transformed the potential, childish human creature into an actual, grown-up one. The innovation of the African theologian consists, as far as this theme is concerned, in adding the idea of divine deceit to all of this. According to the latter, God has made the use of the power of distinction between good and evil more difficult by mingling advantages of appearance with real disadvantages, and disadvantages of appearance with real advantages. So the deceptive conjunction of reality and appearance is claimed to be a fundamental characteristic of human existence on the earth.

He put man midway between the two so that he should have license to pursue evil or good, but with the evil he mixed in some apparently good things, an assortment of attractive delights, that is, to draw man on by the temptations in them to the latent evil, and with the good he mixed in some apparent evils, pain, misery and toil, that is, whose harshness and unpleasantness might depress the spirit into shrinking from latent good. This is where the use of wisdom comes in: we need to see more with our minds than with our bodies, something very few can do, because virtue is hard and rare while pleasure is something many share.³¹

The idea of this divine deceit, a constitutive element of Lactantius' doctrine on the two ways, which I cannot elaborate here,³² permeates the whole text of the *Divine Institutions*. Consequently, it is not only considered as the knowledge of good and evil, that is, the capacity to make a distinction between good and evil, but also as the capacity to make a distinction between real and apparent. In the *Epitome*, which is a kind of summary of the shorter, earlier version of the *Divine Institutes*, Lactantius puts the questions why God let demons provoke pagan religion and why he produced (*fecit*) their chief, Satan at all. He is, thus, concerned eminently about the providential role of vices and not about that of adversities. To answer these questions, he will quote the text of Gellius with the quotation from Chrysippus, which we already met. Lactantius introduces Gellius' text as follows:

pariter agnoverat. Apparet ergo idcirco datam esse homini sapientiam, ut bonum discernat a malo; ut ab incommodis commoda, ab inutilibus utilia distinguat, ut habeat iudicium, et considerantiam, quid cavere, quid appetere, quid fugere, quid sequi debeat. Sapientia igitur constare sine malo non potest, vixitque ille princeps generis humani, quamdiu in solo bono fuit, velut infans, boni ac mali nescius. At enim postea hominem necesse est et sapientem esse et sine ullo malo beatum."

31 *Div. Inst.* 7. 5. 27. add. 14–15: "Posuit itaque hominem inter utrumque medium, ut haberet licentiam vel mali vel boni sequendi. Sed malo admiscuit apparentia quaedam bona, id est varias et delectabiles suavitates, ut earum illecebris induceret hominem ad latens malum. Bono autem admiscuit apparentia quaedam mala, id est, aerumnas, et miserias, et labores, quorum asperitate ac molestia offensus animus refugeret a bono latenti. Hic ergo sapientiae officium desideratur, ut plus mente videamus, quam corpore."

32 For this topic, see especially Loi 1961–65; Rohrdorf 1972; Ingremeau 2006, 383–391; Kendeffy 2010.

If vice is an evil on this account, because it opposes virtue, and virtue is on this account a good, because it overthrows [*affligit*] vice, it follows that virtue cannot exist without vice; and if you take away vice, the merits of virtue will be taken away. For there can be no victory without an enemy. Thus it comes to pass, that good cannot exist without an evil.³³

It is worth noticing that according to this text, virtue can be regarded as a good owing to the fact that it *overthrows* (*affligit*) vice. From this it seems to follow that what is claimed here to be necessary to the agent's moral progress is the agent's own vice and not that of others. Lactantius thus deviates from the original meaning of the quoted text to teach, as Irenaeus did earlier, that the genuine moral sense of the good lies in the striving of the agent to be capable to accomplish this act rather than another one that is wrong but seducing. Here again, the apologist combines the idea of the necessary conjunction of good and evil with the idea of contest and closes both the quotation and his own reflection on this topic with a sentence which evokes Stoic propositions on practical wisdom as read in Seneca's Cicero's and Plutarch's texts.

Therefore God acted with the greatest foresight in placing the subject-matter of virtue in evils which He made for this purpose, that He might establish for us a contest, in which He would crown the victorious with the reward of immortality.³⁴

Lactantius in this text makes the connection between the concept of *phronēsis* and the idea of the necessary conjunction of good and evil more explicit than it was in the Stoic doctrine. This passage of the *Epitome* prepares the longer explanation of Satan's coming into being in the longer version of *Divine Institutes*. In the latter, Chrysippus' idea of the logical and epistemological interdependence of vice and virtue serves as the reason why God produced Evil. Here, the apologist is more faithful to the original content of the Stoic argument than in the *Epitome*: by saying "evil" he means the vice of the others, manifested in unjust deeds unambiguously.

And when he was about to make man, whose rule for living was to be virtue through which he would achieve immortality, he made good and evil so that there could be virtue; if virtue were not beset with evils, it will either lose its potency or else not exist at

33 *Epitome* 24. 2–3: "Si vitium ex eo malum est, quia virtutem impugnat, et virtus ex eo bonum est, quia vitium affligit, ergo non potest virtus sine vitio consistere, et si vitium sustuleris, virtutis merita tollentur." *Div. Inst.* 2. 8. 6. add. 3: "Item facturus hominem, cui virtutem ad vivendum proponeret, per quam immortalitatem assequeretur, bonum et malum fecit, ut posset esse virtus; quae nisi malis agitetur, aut vim suam perdet aut omnino non erit." Cf. *Opif.* 19. 3.

34 *Epitome* 24. 11.

all. It is the sharpness of need which makes wealth look good, it is the gloom of darkness which commends the grace of light, and the pleasures of health and strength are learnt from sickness and pain. Just so, good cannot exist without evil in this life, and though each is opposed to the other, yet they so stick together that if you remove one, you remove both. Good cannot be grasped and understood without the effort to escape from evil, and evil cannot be watched and overcome without the help of good duly grasped and understood. Evil therefore had to be created, so that there could be good.³⁵

By way of conclusion, I would like to emphasize the following claims. The Stoic concept of practical wisdom and the Stoic idea of the necessary conjunction of good and evil, implicitly combined by Stoics themselves, can be found in the works of early Christian thinkers like Irenaeus and Lactantius. Both authors tried to reconcile the Stoic and the biblical concept of wisdom, and both located this hybrid concept in the history of salvation, although Irenaeus did this in a somewhat isolated section of his anti-heretic work. Both the bishop of Lyons and the African apologist associated to the Stoic concept of *phronēsis* the idea of the interdependence of good and bad, as it was done by the Stoic themselves. The core of Irenaeus' theology, to tell the truth, can be exposed relatively faithfully without mentioning this Stoic influence. As for Lactantius, one cannot say this. He took over the doctrine expounded by Seneca on the providential training of virtue by the adversaries and incorporated all these conceptions of Stoic origin into his theological system in a very substantial way. Namely, they make part of the explanation of the production of Satan by God and are integrated into Lactantius' idea of divine deception, which is at the heart of his doctrine of the two ways.

Summary

The Stoic concept of practical wisdom and the Stoic idea of the necessary conjunction of good and evil, implicitly combined by Stoics themselves, can be found in the works of early Christian thinkers like Irenaeus and Lactantius. Both authors tried to reconcile the Stoic and the biblical concepts of wisdom, and both located this hybrid concept in the history of salvation, although Irenaeus did this in a somewhat isolated section of

35 *Div. Inst.* 2. 8. 6. add. 3–6: “Item facturus hominem, cui virtutem ad vivendum proponeret, per quam immortalitatem assequeretur, bonum et malum fecit, ut posset esse virtus, quae nisi malis agitetur, aut vim suam perdet aut omnino non erit. Nam ut opulentia bonum videatur acerbis egestatis fecit et gratiam lucis commendat obscuritas tenebrarum, valetudinis et sanitatis voluptas ex morbo ac dolore cognoscitur, ita bonum sine malo in hac vita esse non potest. Et utrumque licet contrarium sit, tamen ita cohaeret ut ut alterum si tollas, utrumque sustuleris. Nam neque bonum comprehendi ac percipi potest sine declinatione et fuga mali, nec malum caveri ac vinci sine auxilio comprehensi ac percepti boni. Necessae igitur fuerat et malum fieri, ut bonum fieret.”

his anti-heretic work. Both the bishop of Lyons and the African apologist associated with the concept of *phronēsis*, the idea of the interdependence of good and bad, as it was done by the Stoics themselves. The core of Irenaeus' theology, to tell the truth, can be exposed relatively faithfully without mentioning this Stoic influence. As for Lactantius, this is not the case. The African apologist took over the doctrine expounded by Seneca on the providential training of virtue by the adversaries and incorporated all these conceptions of Stoic origin into his theological system in a very substantial way. Namely, they make part of the explanation of the production of Satan by God and are integrated into Lactantius' idea of divine deception, which is at the heart of his doctrine of the two ways.

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