

Epistolary Appropriations, Tusculan Probabilities, and Philosophical Progress—Seneca, Cicero,
Posidonius, in the Defense of Eclecticism and Psychological Dualism

Lacking rigor, coherence, consistency—these are the hallmarks, in the derogatory sense of the word, that eclecticism bears, and what is more, lacking a comprehensive system (Striker 1995: 55). But an inelegant and careless selection of doctrines is not what unites the three authors in the title. The ‘scepticism’ and ‘anti-dogmatism’ (ibid. 56) of Cicero notably is displayed in his *Tusculan Disputations*. Whether he appropriates practices or ideas from the Stoics (3.13-14) or the Cyrenaics (3.28), or promises to yield to an ideological opponent speaking truth, namely Epicurus (*TD* 3.46, 51), his concern, above all else, is for what is likely, what is probable, and to be under the restraint of no one school (*TD* 4.7).

This philosophical independence is mirrored by Seneca, namely in his Letters to Lucilius, that succinct yet pregnant phrase, ‘what is true is mine,’ (*Ep.* 12.11) or when he derides those, who are ‘always interpreters, never authors, hiding in another’s shade,’ (*Ep.* 33.8) and when he states the most strongly in *De Otio* about the necessity of facts, that is, data. (*De Otio* 3.1)

The willingness to appropriate and to think originally, especially drawing as often as he does upon Epicurus, (Motto & Clark 1968: 39) in no way necessitates questioning his Stoic bonafides, yet he follows in the path of another famous Stoic, Posidonius, an Aristotilizer, according to Strabo (Kidd 1971: 213). Drawing as he does upon Galen’s *De Placitis*, Kidd explains that Posidonius’ psychology, while not platonic, nevertheless recognises three *dynameis*, or *oikeiôseis*, not parts, but natural affinities of the soul, and the *aporiai* as to how emotions and impulses come about at all in a rational soul (op. cit.: 204-208) (cf. e.g. Seneca’s *Ep.* 37.5, *non consilio adductus illo sed impetu inpactus est*, or the opening question of *De Ira* 2.1.1). This

progression of philosophy and knowledge necessitates the recasting, but not the abandonment, of Stoic doctrines, as with Seneca concerning *Voluntas* vs the greek *Boulêsis* (Inwood 1995: 76).

This paper explores and seeks to obviate the various problems that have been discussed, not only with respect to eclecticism proper of Seneca especially (e.g. Dillon & Long 1988), but also to the question of philosophical orthodoxy and whether emotions are cognitive, or not (e.g. Inwood 1993, Cooper 1999, Nussbaum 1994), and as well to demonstrate in particular why the works of Posidonius and Seneca are not only innovative, but within the pale of Stoic orthodoxy, historically. This paper argues for a reappraisal, and will use as a test case, in particular, the role of *motus/impetus* or *hormê*, that is, impulse, and by extension Stoicism's "problem of evil," that is, what is the cause of *pathê*, Cicero's *perturbationes* (TD 3.7). The command of, and the denial of obedience thereunto, the desires is made all the more paramount in light thereof (*De Re Publica* 3.37 and *De Tranquillitate Animi* 2.8 – a possible intertext that the paper will also address).

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