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**Kirsch-Klingelhöffer, Charlotte: Frühchristliche Stoarezepktion.** Zur Rezeption einer philosophischen Schule in den apologetischen und antihäretischen Schriften des 2. und frühen 3. Jahrhunderts. – Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2024. 663 S. (SERAPHIM, 21), kt. € 90,00 ISBN: 9783161633171

This impressive work greatly advances our understanding of the role of Stoicism in a number of Early Christian writers from the 2nd and early 3rd c. CE. It provides detailed commentaries on relevant passages from works that are considered apologetic (by Justin Martyr, Tatian, Athenagoras, and Theophilus of Antioch) and anti-heretical (by Irenaeus, Tertullian, to whom the longest section is devoted, and Hippolytus of Rome; with some overlap between these categories). It focuses on themes such as the basic principles of reality, the world conflagration, human freedom and will versus fate and determinism, common conceptions (*koinai ennoiai*) and the ways of knowing God, and the role of corporeality (also in connection with the Christian idea of the resurrection of the body).

This kind of careful analysis is long overdue, especially given that our knowledge of Stoicism has greatly advanced since the foundational work of Michel Spanneut (1957).<sup>1</sup> In this respect, however, the author appears to rely quite heavily on the work of Julia Wildberger (her 2006 *magnum opus* on Seneca and his Stoic background).<sup>2</sup> But on such topics as, for example, the role of common conceptions and so-called pre-conceptions in Stoicism or its theory of the emotions there is important more recent scholarship.

Charlotte Kirsch-Klingelhöffer rightly starts with some fundamental methodological questions. For each Christian author her detailed commentaries are divided into two sections, one devoted to explicit mentions of the Stoics, and the other to their potential implicit influence (for Tertullian, there is an additional section on the alleged parallels with Seneca, explicit and implicit). For the first section K.-K. focuses on the role of doxographies, showing convincingly how each author adapts such overviews of philosophical tenets to his purpose, in service of his Christian worldview, by oscillating between the need to emphasize both Christianity's distinctness and its potential for continuity with the philosophical tradition. One example of the value of this approach is her analysis of Hippolytus' use of the "dog-tied-to-a-cart" image for Stoic fate. K.-K. relies on the context in Hippolytus' work to make the case that he may, in fact, be the inventor of this specific image (540–545). Yet, we should also remember that the Stoics themselves were not reluctant to use lowly (and

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<sup>1</sup> Michel SPANNEUT: *Le stoïcisme et les Pères de l'Église de Clément de Rome à Clément d'Alexandrie* (Patristica Sorbonensia, 1), Paris 1957.

<sup>2</sup> Julia WILDBERGER: *Seneca und die Stoa: Der Platz des Menschen in der Welt*. (Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte, 84.1–2), Berlin-New York 2006.

sometimes shocking) examples to convey their points. Moreover, the dog could be an allusion to the Cynic leanings of Stoicism.

However, the results for the discussion of the implicit influences are more mixed, I would argue. While I share the author's caution about implicit references, I am much more sceptical about the assumption that there was a kind of philosophical *koinê* (7–8 and *passim*) in the sense that Stoic technical terms and notions ended up in a generic, or mainstream, philosophical discourse that no longer shows significant traces of their origin. This assumption, which is widely shared especially in older scholarship, appears to rest on a dubious hermeneutical principle: that terms can be lifted out of their original context without carrying any of the original connotations. While, indeed, each case needs to be judged on its own merit, there is often an implicit polemic at work in ancient authors who coopt Stoic terminology.

K.-K.'s cases for pushing back against Michel Spanneut's claims about Stoic influences on, for example, Theophilus (253) or against Kathleen E. McVey's thesis (1991) that Theophilus' interpretation of Genesis matches a Chrysippean cosmogony (section 3.5.3.4) are quite convincing.<sup>3</sup> Her attempts, however, at downplaying Stoic influences are not always as successful. In denying (against Anthony Briggman 2019),<sup>4</sup> for example, that Irenaeus relies on a specifically Stoic theory of mixture, and especially the *krasis* kind (*di' holou/holôn*, a complete blending in which each component nevertheless retains its characteristics), to account for the relation between soul and body, she mentions two examples of Platonists using *krasis* too (312). The first example comes from Plutarch (*De genio Socratis* 591D–E). But we should keep in mind here that despite his overt polemic, Plutarch himself was quite capable of borrowing certain Stoic notions himself. More importantly, K.-K.'s discussion of a passage from Nemesius (*De natura hominis* 3.39) about Ammonius Saccas' and Porphyry's use of *krasis* overlooks the crucial fact, clear from the context, that both Platonists are mounting a polemic against this type of blending in order to arrive at a different model for the relation between soul and body (called "unfused unity").

A similar issue, I would argue, arises with K.-K.'s treatment of Tertullian, this time with an example that pertains to the doxographical material. She claims that the notion of a corporeal soul was widely shared, also in the medical tradition (389), in order to downplay, again, the specific influence of Stoicism as such. But it is Tertullian himself who in his relevant doxography from *De anima* (5.2–6) gives pride of place to the Stoics, as the author herself admits (395; with an explicit mentioning of Zeno, Cleanthes, and Chrysippus). This view has to be seen against the background of Tertullian's endorsement of a key feature of Stoic ontology, that all existing things are corporeal (see the summary, on 530).

Finally, I would like to return briefly to another aspect of the author's methodology. K.-K. starts with three examples of views that in her opinion cannot or can no longer be considered Stoic as such by the time Christian authors used them (section 2.1). While she indeed has a strong case for the distinction between an internal and external logos, the other two themes, the role of "common conceptions" (already mentioned above) and the theory of divine Providence, are arguably more complex. It is not always easy to separate the Platonist and Stoic elements from one another (Philo of Alexandria is an excellent case in point, which is especially relevant for the author's treatment of

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<sup>3</sup> Kathleen E. McVEY: "The use of Stoic cosmogony in Theophilus of Antioch's *Hexaemeron*", in: *Biblical Hermeneutics in Historical Perspective*, ed. by Mark S. BURROWS/Paul ROREM/Karlfried FROELICH, Grand Rapids 1991, 32–58.

<sup>4</sup> Anthony BRIGGMAN: *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, Oxford 2019.

Theophilus of Antioch). K.-K. overlooks the fact that the Early Stoa had already co-opted crucial features of Plato's *Timaeus*. Moreover, it is no longer because certain Stoic views were, in turn, co-opted by Platonists that their influence as Stoic was not registered as such. Thus K.-K. draws too sharp a distinction between a direct and an indirect transmission of ideas. For instance, even if Irenaeus' "argument from design", based on the beauty and order of the universe, also shows similarities with such claims by other philosophical schools (not specified), the Jewish-Greek tradition, and the Hebrew Scriptures, this would not a priori exclude a convergence with the Stoic notion (326).

The Stoic view of Providence, specifically, deserves a bigger role than K.-K. gives it. In discussing the different views listed in Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho* (1.4–5), one needs to be more cautious with grouping the Stoics together with those who would put some limits on Providence (111–112). There is a wider scholarly debate about the exact implications of the claim in Cicero's *De natura deorum* (2.166–167), put forth by his Stoic character Balbus, that the gods do not care about minor matters. Moreover, K.-K. neglects to mention that in *Discourses* 1.12.1–3 Epictetus, in fact, lists a fifth position (not just four) that posits Providence for individual humans—the position which he goes on to endorse explicitly. Similarly, the claim that our Stoic sources more commonly connect διήκειν διά ("permeating") with πνεῦμα ("breath") rather than with πρόνοια ("Providence") is problematic in light of Diogenes Laertius' report of Stoic physics (7.138) and the fact that both "breath" and "Providence" are associated with the Stoic active divine principle.

In sum, while I think that K.-K. downplays too much the importance of some Stoic elements in these Christian authors, this is truly groundbreaking work of very high quality overall. But, while K.-K. succeeds in showing how each Christian writer adjusts these elements to his specific perspective, the question does remain to which extent such borrowings, in turn, shaped Christian discourse and its emphases. It is very much to be hoped that the study of Stoicism's role in Early Christianity will receive a fresh impetus in the wake of this work that has set a new standard.

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