

# Refugees, Stoicism and cosmic Citizenship

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## 1. Introduction

One of the earliest refugee stories in Western literature is told by Vergil. His *Aeneid* tells a heart-rending account of the hero Aeneas carrying on his back his aged father Anchises, while leading his little son Ascanius by the hand, from the burning ruins of Troy. Few Trojans escape both death and enslavement at the hands of the Greeks sacking their city, but Aeneas gathers the few survivors and leads them on a long, perilous voyage across the sea to distant Italy. There, after much more bloodshed, the refugee Aeneas finally prevails, transplants his people in a new home, and becomes the ancestor of the Romans. Vergil's *Aeneid* may be the earliest refugee story in Latin literature. What is certain is that the story of Aeneas and the other Trojan refugees is a tale thick with Stoic themes.

Acclaimed since his own day as the Latin epic poet par excellence, Vergil displays a profound and perceptive feeling for the ethical and metaphysical implications of Stoic philosophy. To the extent that he appeals to Stoic principles in the *Aeneid* he internalizes them thoroughly and weaves them seamlessly into the web of his epic. Yet, he subordinates them ultimately to his own personal poetic vision. Vergil's ability to grasp the inner significance of the Stoic doctrines which he uses points to the pervasive influence which this philosophy had attained in the Roman culture of his own day, for there is nothing in Vergil's own education, associations, or style of life that suggests any Stoic inclinations on his part.<sup>1</sup>

This is one reason why an examination of Stoicism and refugees is warranted. But study of refugees through the lens of Stoic philosophy need not be limited to literary analysis of Vergil's epic for the following reason. A *refugee* is a person forced to flee his or her homeland to escape danger or persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. A person removed by authority from his or her homeland is an *exile*. Thus, refugees include those who are exiled because of their political opinions or (alleged) seditious activities. Exile was a frequent threat and a common punishment for many prominent Romans, including philosophers. The Stoic philosophers Seneca, Musonius Rufus, and Epictetus were all expelled by imperial authority from Rome.

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1 Colish, 1985, p. 225; cf. Bowra, 1933 and Edwards, 1960.

Therefore, how the Roman imperial Stoics thought about exile, and how Stoic ideas apply to refugees, is worth investigating.

The statesman, orator, philosopher, scientist, tragedian, and prolific author Lucius Annaeus Seneca was accused of adultery with emperor Claudius' niece in 41 A.D. and exiled to Corsica for eight years.<sup>2</sup> Gaius Musonius Rufus, the Roman equestrian and acclaimed Stoic teacher, chose to accompany his friend Rubellius Plautus into exile when Nero banished Plautus around 60 A.D. After Plautus died Musonius returned to Rome under the reign of Galba to teach and practice Stoicism. When Nero discovered the great conspiracy against him led by Calpurnius Piso in 65 A.D., Nero ordered Seneca to commit suicide. Nero exiled Musonius to the island of Gyara in the Aegean Sea where, despite the notoriously desolate surroundings, Musonius reportedly continued to attract and teach students and conducted himself admirably.<sup>3</sup> Musonius' most influential student was Epictetus. In 90 A.D. emperor Domitian expelled Epictetus and other philosophers from Rome because Stoics favorably received opponents of the emperor's tyranny.

So, the Stoics of the Roman empire were very familiar with exile. What did they think of it? I will argue that the Stoics' view of *being* an exile differed sharply from their view of how exiles ought to be *treated*. Specifically, the Stoics theorized that exile is among the things that are neither good nor bad in themselves, so being an exile is in fact indifferent to one's happiness. Given this striking position, we might expect the Stoics to have no sympathy for refugees. Since those in exile suffer no evil, according to Stoic ethical theory, we might suppose that the Stoics believe that refugees and exiles aren't suffering at all and so need no help. I will show that this supposition is mistaken. While Stoics regard living in exile as no obstacle to happiness, they are far from indifferent toward refugees and exiles. Rather, Stoics believe they must welcome and assist exiles because it is only right to do so. I will explain below how Stoic ethics entail this call to aid exiles.

## 2. What Exile is and Why it is No Evil

Four recurring kinds of arguments have been identified in the ancient epistolary tradition of writing letters of consolation to exiles.<sup>4</sup> These are: (1) the exhortation that it is rational to accept exile; (2) the argument for the uncertainty of Fortune and the universality of the human condition of world-citizenship; (3) consideration of suitable places for the exile to visit; and (4) the argument that exile is not evil but neutral. This fourfold classification "corresponds closely with Cynic-Stoic consolations to the bereaved."<sup>5</sup> Musonius Rufus' lecture *That Exile is Not an Evil* belongs to this exilic consolatory genre. One scholar argues that in this lecture Musonius adopts an exilic *persona* borrowed synthetically from the repertoire of Greek

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2 Ferrill, 1966, p. 254 argues that Seneca was very dejected and overpowered by loneliness on Corsica. Cf. Claassen, 1996, p. 588, who feels that Seneca's report that he is happy is cheerful in tone and genuine. Cf. Motto, Clark, 1975.

3 Reydams-Schils, 2005, p. 103-104.

4 Claassen, 1996, p. 571-572.

5 Claassen, 1996, p. 572.

culture.<sup>6</sup> My interest is the ten arguments Musonius marshals against the popular belief of non-Stoics that exile is evil. He gives three types of reasons to deny that exile is an evil. In exile (a) we retain various valuable things, (b) we are rid of several nuisances, and (c) we (can) gain certain advantages. Specifically, (a) in exile we retain the company of true friends, the ability to acquire virtue, essential resources, free and candid speech (*parrhēsia*), the world itself, and the ability to endure exile; (b) exile rids us of false friends, distracting relatives, pointless political service, and soft, luxurious living that causes chronic illness; and (c) in exile one gains leisure and the opportunity to do good, and one can gain fame, improved bodily health, and the virtues of courage, justice, self-control, and wisdom. According to Stoic ethical theory, the nuisances and advantages Musonius adduces are ‘dispreferred’ and ‘preferred indifferents’ respectively that can be used either well or badly. It is natural and proper to reject the former and select the latter so long as doing so in no way compromises virtue, the only true good. Musonius presents ten arguments for the thesis that exile is not an evil and nothing upsetting.

The first argument can be reconstructed as follows.

1. Exile does not deprive us of water, earth, air, or the sun and the other stars.
2. Everywhere and in every way we have fellowship with other human beings.
3. Hence, exile does not deprive us of human companionship.
4. Before our exile, we did not use all of the earth.
5. Hence, if we are removed from a certain part of the earth and from certain people, then this is not terrible.
6. Our true, worthwhile friends would never betray or abandon us.
7. Hence, even in exile we can associate with our true friends.
8. If some of our acquaintances are insincere and false friends, then we are better off being removed from them (by exile) than associating with them.
9. Therefore, no sensible person can be upset being exiled.

Recall that rather than abandon his friend Rubellius Plautus when he was banished, Musonius faithfully shared exile with him. In this first argument he reasons that exile deprives us of neither the necessities of survival, nor the company of true friends. We retain both what we need to sustain our bodies and the companionship we need to bolster our spirits. Virtue calls for preserving true friendship. Musonius may be suggesting that, even in exile, letters of correspondence let us associate with our friends. Thus, exile is nothing to fret.

Musonius’ second argument appeals to the idea of cosmic citizenship. I will examine this argument in the penultimate section below.

In his third argument Musonius contrasts real needs (learning and virtue) with superfluities. He reasons as follows (*Exile* 9.3):

1. In exile people are not dragged into political service by a country that only seems to be theirs.
2. In exile people are not bothered by those who merely seem to be friends.

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6 Whitmarsh, 2001, p. 277.

3. In exile people are not bothered by relatives who keep them preoccupied and distract them from their search for better things.
4. Hence, exile provides people leisure and more opportunity to do good things than they had before they were exiled.
5. Hence, exile never deprived anyone from learning what he needs to do and from acting accordingly.
6. Therefore, exile cannot stop anyone from caring for his real needs and from acquiring virtue.

As in the first argument, here again true and false friends are distinguished. Exile spares us from pests only pretending to be our friends. Musonius draws a parallel distinction between one's true and false countries. Political service to the former makes sense. But political service to a country only pretending to be ours is wasted drudgery and unwise.<sup>7</sup> Exile spares us of the latter. Even some of our relatives deflect us from the pursuit of better goals, so exile shields us from their interference too. Exile affords us the opportunity to learn that acquiring virtue and doing good deeds are what is worthwhile.

Musonius adds to the potential benefits of exile in his fourth argument. Exile transformed Diogenes from an ordinary, sedentary citizen of Sinope into a toughened philosopher, the first Cynic, whose practice of virtue surpassed other philosophers. Some have long suffered from a weak chest, gout, and chronic illnesses due to soft, luxurious living. Exile accustomed them to live more austere, "to follow a more manly lifestyle,"<sup>8</sup> and restored their health. "Thus, by improving people, exile helps them more than it hurts them with respect to both body and soul."<sup>9</sup> So, all things considered, Musonius concludes that exile benefits some people.

In his fifth argument Musonius builds on the contrast between manly austerity and soft living.

1. Lazy and shiftless exiles who are unable to act like men even when they are not in exile are generally at a loss and lack resources.
2. Wherever noble, industrious, and intelligent men go, they flourish and do not feel deprived.
3. Hence, we do not need many things unless we want to have a soft life.
4. Therefore, exiles lack nothing essential.

Though resources tend to be lacking in exile, an energetic, resourceful person rises to meet this challenge. Resourcefulness is a virtue subordinate to wisdom.<sup>10</sup>

Musonius defends a more ambitious claim in his sixth argument: "men who are worthwhile not only would easily acquire the things most necessary for life when they are away from their home, but often would acquire many possessions as well."<sup>11</sup> His examples

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7 Cf. Opsomer, 2002, p. 288, commenting on Plutarch, *On Exile*: "The exile is free from the political obligations which make life difficult in the city from which he is exiled. Often it is precisely the local political strife that causes one's exile."

8 King, 2010, p. 45; cf. Engel, 2000 for Musonius on manliness.

9 King, 2010, p. 45.

10 Long and Sedley, 1987, v. 1, p. 380.

11 King, 2010, p. 46.

are Odysseus, Themistocles, and Dion of Syracuse. Odysseus arrived in Phaeacia alone, naked, and shipwrecked, clearly worse off than any exile. Yet, despite being among strangers, he acquired many possessions. When Themistocles was exiled, instead of seeking help from friends he went to his enemies the Persians. The Persians granted him the cities of Myus, Magnesia, and Lampsacus from which he could glean his living expenses. Still more impressive is Musonius' story about Dion the Syracusan. Robbed of all his property and expelled from his homeland of Sicily by the tyrant Dionysius, Dion obtained enough money in exile to raise an army of mercenaries, invade Sicily, and depose Dionysius.

What of reputation, another 'indifferent' that is neither good nor bad? In his seventh argument Musonius denies that exile necessarily stains one's reputation. "Everyone knows, after all, that many cases are judged wrongly, that many people are thrown out of their fatherland unjustly, and that some men who were good have been driven out by their fellow citizens."<sup>12</sup> His examples are Aristides the Just from Athens and Hermodorus from Ephesus. Diogenes of Sinope and Clearchus the Lacedaemonian are his examples of men whose fame actually grew in exile.

In his eighth argument Musonius rebuts the claim that exiles lose their free speech (*parrhēsia*). He notes that, for the sake of discretion, we should not say what we think always, everywhere, and to just anyone. Does exile force people to refrain from speaking their minds?

People do not refrain from saying what they think because they are exiles; they refrain because they fear that they will suffer pain, death, penalty, or some other such thing for speaking. By Zeus, it is not exile but fear that silences people. Those who still live in their own country – most people, that is – fear things that seem dangerous. The courageous man is as courageous in exile as he was at home; therefore he also says as boldly what he thinks when exiled as when he was not an exile.<sup>13</sup>

Stoics deny that external conditions, e.g. exile, make people act or refrain from acting, e.g. be silent. Rather, our emotions, e.g. fear, spur action and inaction. Most fear things that seem to be dangerous. Most neglect to ascertain whether apparent dangers are real evils, as Stoics do. As a result, most people lack courage. But since courage goes everywhere the courageous person does, exile won't deprive the courageous person of free speech. Musonius' cites two men whom exile never robbed of free speech – Diogenes the Cynic and himself.

His ninth argument ties enduring exile to virtue.

Have you or anyone else seen me crouching before anyone because I am an exile, or have you seen me thinking that my condition is worse than before? By Zeus, you must admit that you have never seen me groaning or moaning because of my exile. Even if someone has deprived us of our country, he has not taken away our ability to endure exile.<sup>14</sup>

The virtue of endurance cannot be taken from Musonius or anyone else. He explains that he has shown why he denies that exile deprives a person of the things which many *consider* good. In good Stoic form, Musonius denies that what many consider good is truly good. Non-Stoics consider pleasure, bodily health, wealth, material possessions, fame, prestige, political power, and similar things to be goods. So, he reasons, even if exile deprives one of

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12 King, 2010, p. 46.

13 King, 2010, p. 47.

14 King, 2010, p. 47-48.

any of these supposed goods, namely, preferred indifferents, it cannot rob one of true goods – the virtues.

The person in exile is not prevented from having courage, justice, self-control, wisdom, or any other virtue, just because he is in exile. When these qualities are present, they tend to honor and benefit a person and show him to be deserving of praise and fame. The absence of these qualities works to harm and shame him by showing him to be bad and without fame. Consequently, if you are a good and virtuous person, exile would not harm or diminish you, because you still have the things that can best assist and elevate you. And if you happen to be a bad person, it is vice, not exile, that harms you – vice, not exile, that brings you grief. You must work on freeing yourself from vice rather than from exile.<sup>15</sup>

The virtues enable us to endure exile and all other conditions that non-Stoics wrongly suppose are hardships. Accordingly, evil, not exile, is the terrible thing that afflicts everyone it touches with misery.

The tenth and last argument in Musonius' lecture on exile concerns the virtue of justice and the evil of injustice. I will discuss it after looking at Epictetus and Seneca on exile.

Epictetus' remarks on exile are scattered throughout the *Discourses* and the *Handbook*. As a good teacher, Epictetus is ever mindful of the firmly held opinions his students bring into his classroom. They begin their education in Stoicism already indoctrinated as non-Stoics. Out of habit most non-Stoics give immediate credence to how things appear instead of inspecting those appearances.

“Outside the classroom, if we see someone grieving, we say ‘He’s devastated.’ If we see a consul, we say, ‘He’s a lucky guy.’ If we see someone in exile, we say ‘How miserable.’ If we see a beggar, we say ‘Wretched man, he’s got nothing to eat.’ These are the sorry judgments we need to concentrate hard to eradicate.”<sup>16</sup>

Most people believe that exile is a terrible thing, even those who have never been exiled. Epictetus rejects this popular belief. He thinks that the *belief* that exile is bad is a terrible, sorry thing. It is that false belief that a Stoic must work to eliminate.

A handy technique for eroding false beliefs about what is bad is to frequently think about exile and other things that *look* terrible. “Every day keep your eyes on death, exile, and everything that looks like it is terrible – death most of all – and you’ll never have a vile thought, nor desire anything too much.”<sup>17</sup> The daily practice of rehearsing the possibility of exile, death, and all seemingly awful events serves as good mental hygiene. This *praemeditatio* cleanses the mind of contemptible thoughts and reigns in overly strong desires. Such cognitive training is vital for liberating oneself from common fears. Epictetus says “Prepare yourself, as Plato says, not just for death, but for torture, exile, flogging – and the loss of everything that doesn’t belong to you. Otherwise, you’ll be a slave among slaves.”<sup>18</sup> Epictetus thinks that fear makes non-Stoics slaves. No one fears Caesar himself, it is death, exile, loss of property, prison, and disenfranchisement they fear.<sup>19</sup> Non-Stoics fear losing things they think

15 King, 2010, p. 48.

16 *Diss.* 3.3.17-18; translations of Epictetus are mine though I consult Oldfather, 1925/1928, Gill – Hard, 1995, and Dobbin, 2008.

17 *Encheiridion* 21.

18 *Diss.* 4.1.172-173.

19 *Diss.* 4.1.60.

belong to them. Non-Stoics believe that their material possessions, wealth, good health, their very bodies, and living in their home country belong to them. Stoics reject these beliefs as false. Since non-Stoics cling to false beliefs about which things are truly theirs, they are dangerously unprepared to lose them. Non-Stoics set themselves up for misery by creating fears about the loss of things that are easily lost.

One's homeland can easily be lost. What if a tyrant threatened to banish Epictetus? Epictetus says the tyrant would be threatening to expel his whole *body* to a foreign land. But, if he judges that exile is nothing to him and refuses to fear it, then *Epictetus* isn't threatened, even a little. Whereas if Epictetus fears anything the tyrant could do to him, then yes, it is Epictetus himself who is threatened.<sup>20</sup> Thus, how one judges what is good, bad, and neither good nor bad, is crucial. One's value judgments determine what one regards as a threat and what one fears. Stoics work to habitually make the right judgments. Right judgments will rid them of fears.

A man Epictetus admires for not fearing exile is the Stoic Quintus Paconius Agrippinus. Epictetus tells the following story about him. Agrippinus received word that he was on trial in the senate, news that upsets non-Stoics. But Agrippinus calmly kept to his usual schedule of exercising at a particular hour in the morning. When he finished exercising, news arrived that he had been condemned.

“‘To exile,’ he asked, ‘or death?’ ‘Exile.’ ‘And what of my property?’ ‘It has not been confiscated.’ ‘Well then, let's go to my villa in Aricia and have lunch there.’ This shows what's possible when we practice what is necessary and make our desire and aversion safe from any setback or adversity.”<sup>21</sup>

With equanimity Agrippinus refused to let a sentence of exile upend his day. The senate's punishment need disturb neither his exercise nor his lunch. What senators do is not up to him. How he decides to spend his day is. Agrippinus trained himself to desire only what is within his power and not to fear what is beyond it. This training is needed to guarantee that our desires are never frustrated and our aversions are never realized. Exile deprives us of nothing that is necessary for living safe from misfortune. Agrippinus adapted to the course of events.

This story illustrates the limited scope of exile. People with the authority to banish are far too weak to hurl anyone off of the planet. “Exile? Where can they expel me? Nowhere outside the world, since wherever I end up, the sun will be there, the moon will be there, and the stars, there will be dreams, birds of augury, and other means of keeping in touch with the gods.”<sup>22</sup> Here Epictetus echoes the first premise of Musonius' first argument. He adds that in exile contact with the gods is retained in dreams and augury.

“And exile? Wherever I go it will be fine with me, for it was fine with me here, not because of the location, but because of my judgments which I shall carry with me. For no one can take these away from me, rather they are the only things that are mine, and they can't be taken away, and I am content to possess them wherever I am and whatever I do.”<sup>23</sup>

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20 *Diss.* 1.29.6-8.

21 *Diss.* 1.1.28-30.

22 *Diss.* 3.22.22.

23 *Diss.* 4.7.14.

One's judgments cannot be mislaid, left behind, or lost like keys. A person cannot be robbed of her values, like she can be of her purse. A Stoic's identity lies in her beliefs, judgments, choices, intentions, and assents. Volitions define the kind of person she is. The good for a Stoic consists in self-respect and integrity of character. Such goods are portable anywhere and everywhere.

Seneca, like Epictetus, distrusts poorly considered popular opinions about which things are good and bad, including exile. Seneca writes: "disregarding the judgment of the majority, who are carried away by the outward appearance of things, whatever the grounds for trusting it, let's consider what exile really is. Of course, a change of location."<sup>24</sup> Seneca observes that the most barren islands – Sciathus, Seriphus, Gyara, and Cossura – are places of exile where some find it pleasant to stay by choice. Despite being rocks surrounded by dangerous cliffs, with the meagerest resources, the most uncivilized people, the most rugged topography, and the most intemperate climate, these islands are populated by more foreigners than natives. Seneca reasons that since some have voluntarily left their homeland to relocate to these places, a change of place is far from being a hardship.<sup>25</sup> His syllogism: (a) exile is a change of place; (b) a change of place is no hardship; (3) hence, exile is no hardship.

Exiles are often burdened by poverty. Doesn't poverty threaten happiness? Seneca denies this. "Nothing is ever enough for greed, but for nature even too little is enough. The poverty of an exile therefore involves no hardship; for no place of exile is so lacking in resources that it cannot amply support a person."<sup>26</sup> Seneca agrees with Musonius that even in exile reasonable, resourceful people can sustain themselves. So, Seneca calls exile a *vanum nomen* and no evil.<sup>27</sup>

"I say that the following are indifferents (that is, that they are neither good nor bad): illness, pain, poverty, exile, death. Not one of these is glorious in itself, yet nothing is glorious without them. For what we praise is not poverty but the person who is not humbled or bowed down by poverty; not exile but the person who went into exile with a braver face than he would have worn when sending another ... All such things are not in themselves either honorable or glorious, but any of them that virtue meets and handles is made honorable and glorious by it. In themselves, they are intermediate."<sup>28</sup>

Exile neither honors nor dishonors the person banished. Rather, it is how he conducts himself in exile that is either good or bad, noble or base, honorable or dishonorable. Location neither exalts nor disgraces anyone.

Seneca offers a sober reminder about where we all end up: "[Death] shows exiles who are always straining their minds and eyes toward their homeland that it does not matter beneath whose soil one is buried."<sup>29</sup> Since death sooner or later overtakes us all, we all end up in the ground, in the same place. The grave is everyone's final destination. Thus, Seneca regards as inconsequential the land of one's grave.

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24 Sen. *Helv.* 6.1, Fantham *et al.*, 2014, p. 52.

25 Sen. *Helv.* 6.4-5.

26 Sen. *Helv.* 10.11, Fantham *et al.*, 2014, p. 60.

27 Sen. *De Vita Beata* 21.1.

28 Sen. *Ep.* 82.10-12, Graver - Long, 2015, p. 273.

29 Sen. *Ad Marciam* 20.2, Fantham *et al.*, 2014, p. 27.



Seneca composed the consolation to his mother Helvia at some point during his eight years of exile on Corsica. In it he argues at length that his exile is not an evil thing for him. He writes that he has determined to conquer Helvia's grief, not to dupe it. He will do this by showing that (a) in exile he experiences nothing that could cause him to be called wretched; (b) there is nothing about his exile that could make his relatives wretched on his account; and (c) his mother's lot, which depends completely on his, is not hard to bear.<sup>30</sup>

Seneca argues as follows. First, he notes that emigrants have many reasons to leave their homeland and seek a new one.

“The destruction of their cities by enemy attack forced some to escape to foreign lands when they were robbed of their own; some were dislodged by political discord at home; some were sent out to relieve the burden caused by overcrowding of an excessive population; some were driven out by disease, by frequent earthquakes, or by some unbearable deficiencies in the unproductive soil; some were beguiled by overblown reports of a fertile shore. Different people have been led by different causes to leave their homes, but this at least is clear: nothing has stayed where it came into being. The human race is constantly running this way and that, in a world so vast something changes every day: the foundations of new cities are laid and new names of nations emerge, while older powers are obliterated or transformed into a subsidiary of a stronger power. But all these migrations of peoples – what are they but states of communal exile?”<sup>31</sup>

Seneca adopts a global perspective. Human beings are always moving, traveling, and migrating in a world that itself constantly changes. Political exiles and war refugees are just two of the many groups engaged in ongoing relocation.

Seneca observes that victors and vanquished alike were scattered throughout strange lands by the Trojan War. He adduces the legend of Aeneas: “To be sure, the Roman empire itself looks back to an exile as its founder – a refugee from his captured city who, taking with him its few survivors, was forced by fear of the conqueror to make for distant parts and was brought to Italy.”<sup>32</sup> Thus, Seneca deduces that the displacement of peoples over the globe is nothing new, unusual, or troubling. Mobility is endemic to humanity. Immigrants are the ancestors of virtually everyone on earth.

“To sum up, you’ll scarcely find any land which is still lived in by its original inhabitants; every population consists of mixed and foreign stock. One people has come after another, what one has viewed with disdain another has ardently desired, and one people has expelled another only to be driven out itself. So it is by decree of fate that nothing remains where it is in the same condition forever. To offset the actual change of place, and barring the other disadvantages that attach to exile, Varro, the most learned of Romans, holds that this is remedy enough, that wherever we come, we inevitably experience the same order of nature. Marcus Brutus thinks it a sufficient compensation that exiles can take with them their own virtues. Even if anyone judges these two considerations, taken individually, inadequate to comfort the exile, he’ll admit that they are extremely effective in combination. For how little it is that we actually lose! Wherever we go, the two finest attributes will go with us – universal nature and individual virtue.”<sup>33</sup>

This is a key premise in Seneca's argument. He and Musonius agree that universal nature and their own virtues accompany refugees wherever they go. Universal nature equips us with

30 Sen. *Helv.* 4.1.

31 Sen. *Helv.* 7.4-5, Fantham *et al.*, 2014, p. 54.

32 Sen. *Helv.* 7.7; Fantham *et al.*, 2014, p. 54-55.

33 Sen. *Helv.* 7.10-8.2, Fantham *et al.*, 2014, p. 55.

reason and intelligence. When fully cultivated and perfected, reason and intelligence become virtue. Thus, a Stoic refugee's rationality and virtues of character enable her to adapt to the order of nature anywhere. Exile cannot rob a Stoic of her virtuous mind, which is all she needs to live happily in accord with nature.

The Stoics' conception of virtue is very democratic in that virtue is available to everyone. Seneca writes: "Virtue shuts the door on no one. It is open to everyone and lets us all in, invites us in: the freeborn, ex-slaves, slaves, kings, and exiles. It does not choose ancestry or wealth; virtue is satisfied with the bare person."<sup>34</sup> This tenet is integral to Seneca's account because it closely connects with the Stoics' controversial contention that virtue is the only good. Seneca defends this doctrine thus: "Whatever is best for mankind lies beyond human control, and can be neither given nor taken away."<sup>35</sup> This is because all that is best for us is the world and our best minds. "Even places of exile are adequate for essentials, but not even kingdoms for superfluities. It's the mind that makes us rich; it follows us into exile, and in the harshest wildernesses, when it has found enough there to support the body, it takes delight in its own plentiful goods."<sup>36</sup> The wealth of virtue that the mind carries with it is carried effortlessly. As Epictetus taught, only the body can be banished.

"And so the mind cannot ever be exiled, liberated as it is and akin to the gods and equal to all the world and all ages; for its thought moves around the entire heavens and is granted access to the whole of time, past and future. This mere body, the soul's prison and chain, is tossed this way and that; punishments are inflicted on it, and villainies and diseases. But the mind itself is sacred and eternal, and no violent hand can be laid on it."<sup>37</sup>

The body is vulnerable to robbery, prison, and exile. The mind cannot be touched. The mind is free to think of any place, any time, and anything, no matter where the body sits. This is why Seneca regards the mind as at home everywhere in this world and in any cosmic realm beyond it. He concludes: "let us hasten with undaunted step wherever circumstances lead us, let us travel over any lands whatsoever: no place of exile [can] be found in the world, [since nothing in the world] is alien to mankind."<sup>38</sup> The human mind can grasp the order of nature and the kinship of reason that we share with the gods. Therefore, Seneca reasons, we can be at home everywhere in the world because, from this perspective, the world itself *is* our home. Being exiled is no hardship and no evil to a Stoic because exile can only displace her body from one corner of her home to another. But no corner of her home is alien to her. Nor does any location alter her identity as a rational being capable of virtue. Nowhere need she be alienated from her sense of belonging to and in the cosmos. This is what Seneca means when he says that "to the wise man every place is his homeland."<sup>39</sup>

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34 Sen. *Ben.* 3.18.2, Griffin - Inwood, 2011, p. 70.

35 Sen. *Helv.* 8. 4, Fantham *et al.*, 2014, p. 56.

36 Sen. *Helv.* 11.4-5, Fantham *et al.*, 2014, p. 61.

37 Sen. *Helv.* 11.7, Fantham *et al.*, 2014, p. 61-62.

38 Sen. *Helv.* 8.5; Fantham *et al.*, 2014, p. 56.

39 Sen. *Helv.* 9.7; Fantham *et al.*, 2014, p. 58.

### 3. Exile and Friends in Need

In Stoic ethics the familial, social, civic, and occupational roles we play guide our actions in a wide array of situations.<sup>40</sup> Some roles we are born into, others we choose, others are forced upon us. We choose our friends, not our parents. We become refugees when that role is forced upon us. How might our role as a friend dictate dealing with exile? Epictetus provides a clue when discussing the limited purpose of divination. He thinks that divination should be used only if we are curious to learn about a future outcome, not when reason can solve a problem.

“So, whenever it is necessary to share the danger faced by a friend or your country, don’t appeal to divination to decide whether you ought to share in the danger. For if the seer should tell you that the omens are bad, then it’s clear that death, or the maiming of some part of your body, or exile is predicted. Nevertheless, reason chooses to stand by your friend even in these situations and to share the danger with your country.”<sup>41</sup>

Our role as a citizen of a particular country dictates that when our homeland is threatened, we defend it. Similarly, our role as a friend dictates that when danger threatens our friend, we face that danger with our friend. Defending our country and facing danger beside our friend come with risks. Defending our country from tyranny, for example, could result in the tyrant punishing us with exile, bodily injury, or execution. Sharing in a danger that faces our friend could also result in exile, physical harm, or death. We already know these things, so we certainly don’t need to consult a diviner to find out what is portended. Portents of the future can’t tell us what we ought to do now. Rather, Epictetus insists, reason all by itself dictates that we do what we can to defend our country, no matter what. Reason demands that we stick by our friend, come what may.

Does the imperative to stick by your friend, no matter the risk, suggest how you ought to treat a refugee? Epictetus says we should “heed the greater prophet, the Pythian Apollo, who threw out of his temple the man who didn’t help his friend when he was being killed.”<sup>42</sup> He thinks it obvious that Apollo wants us to help defend our friends from attack. Refugees are often attacked. But it would be a strain to interpret this text to imply that we ought to help defend refugees from attack. Our friends may well not be refugees. Most or perhaps all refugees are total strangers to us. Should we meet upon and become acquainted with a refugee, over time he or she might become our friend. Yet Epictetus’ ethic to stick by your friend does not require you to stick by a refugee (or an exile) who is not your friend.

What of a friend who is exiled? To the question ‘Why make a friend?’ Seneca replies: “To have someone I can die for, someone I can accompany into exile, someone whose life I can save, even by laying down my own.”<sup>43</sup> For a Stoic, though her own exile is not a burden, sharing in her friend’s exile is just the sort of thing friends do. We saw that Musonius shared his friend Rubellius Plautus’ exile. Yet the obligations of a Stoic to exiles and refugees that are not her friends cannot be securely derived from her role as a friend. A different role is needed for that.

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40 Cf. Johnson, 2014.

41 Epict. *Ench.* 32.3.

42 Epict. *Ench.* 32.3.

43 Sen. *Ep.* 9.10, Graver - Long, 2015, p. 41-42.

#### 4. Cosmopolitanism and the Idea of Dual Citizenship

The Stoics hold that exile constitutes no hardship for a banished person. This might suggest that people in exile need no help at all. The Stoics argue that exile is no evil and so does not detract from a banished person's happiness. This might suggest that those who aren't exiled need have no concern for those who are. If exile is an indifferent, then wouldn't a Stoic be indifferent toward exiles? Contrary to what we might expect, Stoics emphatically reject the view that exiles aren't our concern and warrant no action on our part. Stoics are not at all indifferent to the needs of exiles. Indeed, Stoic ethics demands that exiles be welcomed into our communities, embraced by us as new neighbors, and provided refuge.

I now return to Musonius' second argument in *That Exile is Not an Evil*. He appeals to the authority of Socrates<sup>44</sup> to argue as follows.

1. A reasonable person believes that to be exiled is to be deprived only of a certain city.
2. A reasonable person neither applauds a place nor rejects it because he holds it responsible for his happiness or unhappiness.
3. A reasonable person relies on himself for his whole well-being and happiness.
4. Socrates (correctly) believed that the world is the common homeland of all human beings.
5. Hence, a reasonable person considers himself to be a citizen of the city of Zeus which is populated by human beings and gods.
6. Hence, if you go away from where you were born and raised, you must not consider yourself to be exiled from your homeland.
7. A person who lives in his own homeland but in a different house from the one in which he was born would be silly and ridiculous to complain and moan about this.
8. Likewise, someone who thinks it a misfortune to be living in a different city from the one in which he happens to have been born could reasonably be considered to be witless and mindless.<sup>45</sup>

The city of Zeus populated by human beings and gods is the cosmic city (*cosmopolis*). The citizen (*politēs*) of the cosmic city is the cosmopolitan (*cosmopolitēs*).<sup>46</sup> So, Musonius holds that belief in cosmopolitanism, coupled with committed self-reliance, defeats the belief that exile is an evil. Exiles who bemoan their fate reject cosmopolitanism falsely believing that their homeland is far narrower than it truly is.

Musonius ends his lecture on exile by considering whether, in a particular case, the punishment of exile is just. His argument takes the form of a constructive dilemma: Either p or q. If p, then r. If q, then s. Ergo, either r or s.

Indeed, one of two things must be the case: you are in exile either unjustly or justly. If justly, how is it correct or proper to be upset over just things? If unjustly, our exile is caused not by our wickedness but by the wickedness of the people who sent us into exile. (And in this case *they*

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44 See Opsomer, 2002, p. 281-285.

45 King, 2010, p. 44-45.

46 Cf. Schofield, 1991; Obbink, 1999; Sellars, 2007.

are wicked, since, by Zeus, acting unjustly – the thing which has befallen them – is the thing most hated by the gods.)<sup>47</sup>

Justice is a good thing. If someone is justly exiled, that outcome is good and to be embraced. But if someone is unjustly exiled, then it is the authorities who imposed that unjust punishment that are guilty of injustice. They are to blame for this wicked act. The unjustly banished person is a blameless victim of injustice. So, the tacit conclusion of this constructive dilemma is: either (r) it is wrong to be upset over being justly exiled, or (s) it is wrong to be upset over the injustice committed by those who unjustly exile you. Either way, being exiled is no cause for distress.

A non-Stoic may object to (s) and argue that we ought to be upset by the unjust deeds of wicked people, regardless of who their victims are. But Stoics follow Socrates in holding that unjust deeds harm the perpetrator of the injustice, not the victims of the injustice. We are not responsible for the wickedness of others, since ultimately that is beyond our power. Our own actions are up to us. So, Stoics reason that we ought to focus our concern on acting justly ourselves, not obsess about how others act. That is on them.

Indeed, Musonius asserts, the gods hate unjust actions most of all. He concludes: “Both the gods and fair-minded men will agree that those who have been wronged – those like ourselves – deserve help, not hatred.”<sup>48</sup> Justice requires that we help victims of injustice, according to Musonius. These would include both persons unjustly exiled and, I argue, persons forced to flee their homeland to escape danger or persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. Surely refugees deserve to be endangered and persecuted no more than those unjustly exiled deserve exile. Thus, by Musonius’ logic, both the gods and fair-minded people would agree that non-refugees ought to help, not hate, refugees.

Consider Epictetus’ approval of Homer’s remarks about the stranger.<sup>49</sup> Epictetus commends the pious swineherd Eumaeus for welcoming Odysseus as a guest-friend without knowing who he is: “It is wrong to dishonor a stranger, because all strangers and beggars are from Zeus.” Nor is it right to dishonor a father or a brother, Epictetus infers, because Zeus, the god of fathers and the god of kindred, oversees all our social relations. As noted above, nearly all refugees are strangers. Epictetus judges that to spurn strangers is to dishonor them and offend Zeus. Thus, for Epictetus as well, failure to welcome a refugee is impious.

An obligation to aid exiles can also be derived from Seneca’s version of Stoic cosmopolitanism. He explains that the cosmopolitan has dual roles that reflect dual commonwealths.

“Let’s embrace the idea that there are two commonwealths. The one is vast and truly common to all, and includes the gods as well as mankind; within it, we look neither to this mere corner nor to that, but we measure the boundaries of our state by the sun’s course. The other is the one in which we are enrolled by the circumstances of our birth – I mean Athens or Carthage or any other city that belongs not to the whole of mankind but to a particular population. Certain people

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47 King, 2010, p. 48.

48 King, 2010, p. 48.

49 Hom. *Od.* 14.56-58 at *Diss.* 3.11.4-6. I thank Brian E. Johnson for this reference.

give devoted service to both commonwealths, the greater and the lesser, at the same time; some serve only the lesser, some only the greater.”<sup>50</sup>

Seneca implies that it is a challenge to successfully serve both the greater and the lesser commonwealths. Those of modest ambition aim to serve one commonwealth or the other. But isn't Seneca urging his fellow Stoics to tackle the loftier task of serving both commonwealths? With his own prolific writing and his service as *quaestor*, senator, *praetor*, tutor and advisor to Nero, and suffect consul, surely Seneca tried to serve both commonwealths.

Another Stoic who appears to have taken up the challenge of serving both commonwealths was the emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. From an early age Marcus was groomed for imperial rule by emperor Hadrian. Since he enjoyed the emperor's favor, Marcus never faced the possibility of exile as Seneca, Musonius Rufus, and Epictetus did. Rather, when he became emperor Marcus gained the authority to banish others. In the *Meditations*, Marcus reminds himself: “What benefits anyone is to do what his own nature requires. And mine is rational. Rational and civic. My city and state are Rome – as Antoninus. But as a human being? The world. So for me, ‘good’ can only mean what's good for both communities.”<sup>51</sup> Marcus echoes both Seneca's and Musonius' affirmation of Stoic cosmopolitanism, according to which every rational person is endowed with a kind of dual citizenship. Marcus was born in the city of Rome and took the name “Antoninus” when he was adopted by his maternal uncle. Thus, as an individual born at a particular place and time, Marcus became a citizen of Rome. But his humanity and rationality, shared with all other human beings, also made Marcus a citizen of the world. Thus, the Stoics believe that everyone is simultaneously a member of two communities, one local, the other global. For Marcus this means that his good must consist in doing good for both Rome (the microcosm) and the world (the macrocosm).

As Seneca learned, doing good for Rome is easy to understand but perhaps rather difficult to accomplish. In his role as emperor, Marcus' duty is to work to benefit all residents of the empire. But his duties extend beyond governing Roman citizens. Marcus is also a citizen of the entire world, which is populated by all rational beings of all nations. Marcus reflects:

“If thought is something we share, then so is reason – what makes us reasoning beings. If so, then the reason that tells us what to do and what not to do is also shared. And if so, we share a common law. And thus, are fellow citizens. And fellow citizens of something. And in that case, our state must be the *world*. What other entity could all of humanity belong to? And from it – from this state that we share – come thought and reason and law.”<sup>52</sup>

Since we share the ability to think and reason with all human beings, Marcus infers that this shared reason also dictates how to act. Reason dictates what is good or bad, right or wrong, lawful or unlawful, just or unjust. So, the argument goes, the shared reason of all human beings makes everyone fellow citizens of the whole world. Our shared humanity makes us all neighbors living in the same shared community as intimately interconnected as limbs of the same body or bees in a hive.<sup>53</sup>

50 Sen. *De otio* 4.1, Fantham *et al.*, 2014, p. 224.

51 M. Aur. *Med.* 6.44, Hays, 2002, p. 79.

52 M. Aur. *Med.* 4.4, Hays, 2002, p. 38-39.

53 Cf. Stephens, 2012, p. 89-100.

Marcus and Epictetus both emphasize the organic nature of the social bonds connecting all human beings.<sup>54</sup> Marcus invokes graphic carnage to illustrate the violence one inflicts by severing oneself from the social whole.

“Have you ever seen a severed hand or foot, or a decapitated head, just lying somewhere far away from the body it belonged to...? That’s what we do to ourselves – or try to do – when we rebel against what happens to us, when we segregate ourselves. Or when we do something selfish. You have torn yourself away from unity – your natural state, one you were born to share in. Now you’ve cut yourself off from it. But you have one advantage here: you can reattach yourself. A privilege God has granted to no other part of no other whole – to be separated, cut away, and reunited.”<sup>55</sup>

In a similar text Marcus describes an arboreal image to express the idea of social cohesion and the need people have to preserve solidarity with one another.

“A branch cut away from the branch beside it is simultaneously cut away from the whole tree. So too a human being separated from another is cut loose from the whole community. The branch is cut off by someone else. But people cut themselves off – through hatred, through rejection – and don’t realize that they’re cutting themselves off from the whole civic enterprise. Except that we also have a gift, given us by Zeus, who founded this community of ours. We can reattach ourselves and become once more components of the whole. But if the rupture is too often repeated, it makes the severed part hard to reconnect, and to restore. You can see the difference between the branch that’s been there since the beginning, remaining on the tree and growing with it, and the one that’s been cut off and grafted back. ‘One trunk, two minds.’ As the gardeners put it.”<sup>56</sup>

To hate foreigners and spurn refugees is to sever oneself from the greater commonwealth, as Seneca calls it, or the whole civic enterprise, as Marcus terms it. Thus, the Stoics regard xenophobia as a kind of self-inflicted mental disease. Yet Marcus believes that we also possess the remedy to this disease. We can cure ourselves of fear and hatred of those forced to flee their homelands in search of refuge in a new land, a new lesser commonwealth. We heal ourselves by reattaching ourselves to the greater commonwealth, affirming our identity as cosmopolitans, and reconnecting ourselves to the whole that unites all citizens of the world.

## 5. How to Treat Refugees

I suggest that the Stoic ideal of cosmopolitanism provides a clear answer to the question of our relationship with refugees. Since all refugees and all exiles are fellow citizens of our *cosmopolis*, reason demands that they be protected under the cosmic law. Our shared humanity makes them our neighbors. As our neighbors, we must share our community and its resources with them. Stoics believe that all human beings have a natural affinity with each other that grows from birth. This is their concept of *oikeiōsis*.<sup>57</sup> Our inborn sociability impels us to live with others, collaborate with others, and build strong networks of association and cooperation. The commonality of reason makes us all equal citizens of the world, fellow

54 Cf. Stanton, 1968; Long, 2002, p. 201; Stephens, 2007, p. 91-96.

55 M. Aur. *Med.* 8.34, Hays, 2002, p. 107-108.

56 M. Aur. *Med.* 11.8, Hays, 2002, p. 149-150.

57 Cf. Pembroke, 1971; Striker, 1983; Blundell, 1990; Engberg-Pedersen, 1990; Inwood, 1996; Long, 2002, p. 182-185, 197-198; Reydams-Schils, 2002, 2005; Klein, 2016.

cosmopolitans, sharing one state, one world, and governed by one common law. This common law is justice. Justice requires that we share our resources with those of our peers whose circumstances leave them in need.

The Stoics reason that a person in exile need not be regarded as suffering from an evil condition in order for us to recognize that she needs and deserves our help. On the Stoic view, a refugee is not a helpless alien whose misfortune has nothing to do with us. Rather, a refugee is our fellow citizen whose misfortune we have both the power and the duty to ameliorate. By coming to the aid of a fugitive fleeing the horrors of war, we promote our own good, act as good neighbors and good citizens, affirm our own humanity, and welcome that person back into the security of the *cosmopolis*. We preserve and promote the gods' cosmic law of justice.

A final apposite point can be made about Stoic psychology. The motive of the Stoic cosmopolitan to help refugees and exiles is not pity. "The Stoics condemned [pity] unconditionally, in the words of their founder, Zeno, as a disease of the soul. They considered it was due to the mistaken notion that a man's sufferings were really evils, and claimed that more could be done by a reasonable act of clemency than by the emotion of pity."<sup>58</sup> Moreover, Stoics recognize that fortune is fickle. The peace, prosperity, health, and security we enjoy today can be ripped away from us tomorrow. No one anywhere is safe from "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune."<sup>59</sup> All are subject to the vicissitudes of fate. Consequently, a Stoic doesn't regard herself as superior to a person who needs help. To pity another presupposes that the pitier believes that she is better off than and above the person pitied. The pitier *stoops* to pity the pitiful person. Since the Stoic denies that she is above the exile or the beggar or the prisoner, this is one reason why the Stoic does not pity others.

A lack of pity rooted in egalitarian respect, however, is nothing like scorn or contempt. The following derisive characterization of the Stoic sage is thus quite tendentious:

The wise [Stoic] philosopher becomes a citizen in a cosmic city or world-state ruled by the gods; he thereby transcends in an important measure the tawdry demi-monde of the many parochial cities with their ethnic divisions and prejudices, wars, slavery, traditional families and conventional private property. From this transnational, sublime, spiritual height the wise man looks down in contempt, though he sees it his duty to participate in politics and family life in his own pure and sententious manner....<sup>60</sup>

This caustic swipe is based on Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers* and fragmentary reports of the writings of the early Stoics in *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*. But it is dangerous to use such non-Stoic and often anti-Stoic sources blithely as if they were entirely reliable sources of Stoic philosophy. Pangle belittles the Stoics' admiration for Diogenes the Cynic, reputed to have been the first to call himself a *cosmopolitēs*. A more sympathetic account of the world citizenship of Diogenes paints him as a combination of refugee and hippy, "a Hercules of the mind, whose conquests would be the monsters of irrational passion and cultural prejudice and whose weapon would be reason on the path

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58 Bowra, 1933, p. 18.

59 Shakespeare, 1603, Act 3, Scene 1; for classical Stoic consolations for exile in relation to exile in Shakespearean drama cf. Kingsley-Smith, 2003, p. 112-113.

60 Pangle, 1998, p. 242.



to self-mastery.”<sup>61</sup> The texts expressing the cosmopolitan ideal in actual Stoic authors like Seneca, Musonius Rufus, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius hardly invite either looking down in contempt on neighbors or severity “in insisting on the pitiless retributive punishment of the base and foolish unwise.”<sup>62</sup> To the contrary, the Stoic thinks that to pity is to condescend to the person needing help, not to respect her as an equal who is just as vulnerable to misfortune as everyone – oneself included. Egalitarian respect motivates the Stoic to aid the needy. As for the unwise, Stoics believe they need *wisdom*. Stoics respect the unwise by offering to educate, not punish, them. Stoic teachers devote themselves to sharing wisdom with those in need of it. Those who need wisdom suffer from fear, anger, hatred, worry, resentment, jealousy, lechery, complacency, and other violent, harmful, self-destructive passions (*pathē*) of the mind.

A second reason Stoics reject pity is that they think it unwise to take on the distress of individuals who believe they are suffering hardship. Seneca explains that the Stoic sage will not feel pity, because pity is a feeling of suffering, and multiplying suffering is harmful, not helpful. Rather, “All the other things that those who feel pity want to do, the wise person will do gladly and with mind uplifted: he will bring succor to another’s tears, not join in them; he will give a hand to the shipwrecked, shelter to the exile, a coin to the needy.”<sup>63</sup> Thus, it is not shared misery that moves the Stoic to shelter the exile. Rather, it is recognition that justice, humanity, and reason call on citizens of the world to help each other. We all share the same home, after all.

In conclusion, I have argued that while the Roman Stoics did not regard exile as an evil, they held that we ought to help those in exile, welcome them into our communities, share our resources with them, and respect them as our peers and fellow cosmic citizens. The Roman Stoics regarded their own exiles as indifferent to their own happiness because they viewed them not as obstacles to a good life, but as opportunities to do good. To classify exile as an indifferent in Stoic ethics does not mean that those in exile are to be ignored, nor does it justify being indifferent to their situation. Rather, the Stoics believed that a person’s moral character is displayed precisely in how she deals with exile, displaced peoples, social conflict, bigotry, corruption, political turmoil, illness, pain, poverty, war, and death. Dealing with exile includes both one’s own exile and the exiles of others. The virtue of justice demands that the Stoic treat refugees and exiles well, since they are our fellow cosmic citizens. Therefore, from the Stoic perspective, Aeneas, his father, his son, and their few comrades who survived the sack of Troy became refugees by accident, but they, like us, are citizens of the world by birth. As such they and all refugees deserve refuge as our peers in our local communities. Stoics wisely teach that we must make our home theirs.

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61 Long, 2008, p. 54.

62 Pangle, 1998, p. 242.

63 Sen. *Clem.* 2.6.2, Kaster - Nussbaum, 2010, p. 174.

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