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Contradictions Around the Stoic Sage

Chapter Twenty of Plutarch's *On Stoic Self-Contradictions*

1. The contradictions

The study of Stoicism offers numerous contradictions to the inquiring mind. The history of the school spans over the course of half a millennium, from the 3rd century BCE to the 2nd century CE. During this period, the school itself changed as new concepts emerged and the emphasis shifted from one concept to another. Similarly to other philosophical traditions, the various representatives held differing views, which in itself led to some inconsistencies within the school. In addition to this synchronic and diachronic diversity, the fact that we only have fragments from the works of the founding figures such as Chrysippus¹ makes it even more difficult to understand the main concepts and the specific details of Stoic thought. Furthermore, a characteristic feature of Stoicism was that its proponents took pride in advancing views which seemed paradoxical and contradictory to common sense at first sight. According to Cicero, even Stoics themselves called these propositions paradoxes.²

Plutarch dedicated his treatise *On Stoic Self-Contradictions* to exposing the self-contradictory statements found in various places in the works of Stoic authors (mainly Chrysippus), thus suggesting a conclusion that their system as a whole is illogical and as such, untenable. The work is centered on the discrepancy between the lifestyles of the representatives of Stoicism and their teachings. Chapter 19 and 20³ bring to light the contradictions about the Stoic sage as the Stoics themselves understand and explain the concept. Chapter 19 examines the concept of the perceptibility of good and evil in connection with the sage, and concludes with a question about the self-consciousness of the Stoic sage, as the Stoics held that the metamorphosis of an ordinary man into a full-fledged sage was instantaneous and he was not aware of this sudden transformation and his own novel state. Consequently, the sage would not notice that suddenly he was in possession of all the virtues. In the first phase of the Stoic tradition, the difference between a “good” and a “bad” person, a virtuous and a vicious man, was extremely

1 Numerous fragments from the works of Chrysippus and other Stoic philosophers survived verily due to Plutarch's bitter enmity with them, thus the Platonist author turned out to be one of those who transferred Stoic philosophy to posterity.

2 *Paradoxa Stoicorum ad M. Brutum* 4: “Quae quia sunt admirabilia contraque opinionem omnium ab ipsis [Stoicis] etiam παράδοξα appellantur.” Because these are wondrous things and against the common sense, these are called paradoxes even by (the Stoics) themselves.

3 *St. Rep.* 1043B–1044B.

strict and clear-cut, as the former was the perfect sage possessing all virtues, while the latter was just the opposite, originally applied to everyone else. “All virtuous persons are equally virtuous and all non-virtuous persons are equally vicious.”⁴ “Sagacity is a state of psychic perfection and ... all other states are equally imperfect and vicious.”⁵ An intermediate state is also present between the perfectly wise and the utterly bad: that of the progressive man (*prokoptōn*), who is on his way to ethical perfection, but who has not attained it yet. In Plutarch’s view, the instantaneous change from an ordinary or bad person into a sage, and especially the idea that the person is not conscious of this change is in direct contradiction to another Stoic doctrine, namely, that virtues and vices are perceptible. How is it possible that the sage fails to perceive his own virtues if everyone else is capable of doing so? (1042F–1043A). Plutarch is using the first Agrippan method called *diaphōnia*. Although nothing is known about Agrippa, who might have been Plutarch’s contemporary, his Five Modes of argumentation, which became a traditional method of reasoning in the sceptical tradition, have been preserved in Sextus Empiricus’ *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (*Pyrrhōneioi Hypotyposēis*).⁶ The first among these, *diaphōnia*, demonstrates contradictions between ordinary life and philosophical teachings. The method is extended to examine the teachings of a given philosopher. Unfortunately, without an attempt of understanding the deeper coherence of the given system (just as here in the case of Stoic teachings), the presentation of superficial contradictions that do not affect the essence of the school’s main tenets has questionable philosophical merit.

In this article I shall focus on the following chapter, Chapter 20, which continues the topic of the Stoic sage started in Chapter 19. It considers two main contradictions about the Stoic sage: his participation in or withdrawal from public affairs and his attitude towards wealth. In Chapter 20, Plutarch accuses Chrysippus that in his book *Objects of Choice Per Se*,⁷ the Stoic philosopher states that the sage pursues a tranquil life far from public affairs, while in his book on *Ways of Living*, he writes that a sage either assumes kingship himself or accompanies kings as a counsellor (1043B–C). For a Greek citizen, these two ways of life are fundamentally contradictory, as the lifestyles of the *idiotēs* and the *politēs* are mutually exclusive. Plutarch continues castigating Chrysippus further. The motivation behind joining a king’s court is profit, which is another source of contradiction. In his work on *Nature*, Chrysippus reckons that the sage needs only water and bread (grain) and does not care about wealth. In other places in the same work he lists the three ways of earning money that are appropriate for a sage: the first of these is the royal occupation as mentioned above; the second is through “friends,” and the third is being a teacher. Plutarch is exceptionally upset about the third mode of

4 Holowchak 2008, 4.

5 Holowchak 2008, 27.

6 *PHI*. 164–177.

7 It is well known that Chrysippus’ writings survived only in fragments, many of them in Plutarch’s writings.

income and goes into detail about Chrysippus' prescriptions on how to collect tuition. What outrages Plutarch the most is the vast chasm between the idea of the tranquil sage far from affairs and content with bread and water on the one hand, and the caricature he creates on the basis of Chrysippus' writings about the eye-turning and profit-seeking meddlesome individual also called a sage on the other hand.

As a third element, the question of injustice joins these two considerations. In the ideal picture Chrysippus paints about the sage, the wise man cannot be deceived, and no injustice can cause him harm. Contrary to this, however, in another work of his Chrysippus elaborates on the different methods of collecting tuition, so that the sage would not be open to "fraudulent practices" (1044A).⁸ Two different concepts appear here: *dikē* and *blabē*, 'justice' and 'harm' respectively. Plutarch is eager to prove that whoever suffers injustice also suffers harm, so if Chrysippus warns the sage against injustice, then at the same time he warns him against harm, too, so the self-contradiction becomes obvious: the sage cannot be open and not open to harm at the same time. This marks the end of the chapters concentrating on the Stoic sage and the contradictions around him. As typical of Plutarch, he does not infer any deep and sophisticated conclusions but only exposes the contradictions. He leaves it to his audience to draw the consequences.

Let us consider these accusations one by one. The first question is that of secluded life versus taking part in public affairs (1043A–B). Plutarch first paraphrases then directly quotes Chrysippus. There are slight differences between the two: in Plutarch's paraphrase the wise man (*sophos*) stays away from (public) matters (*apragmōn*), minds his own business (*idiopragmōn*), and takes care only of his own affairs (*ta hautou prattein*). In the direct quote, Chrysippus says that the prudent man (*phronimos*) stays away from (public) matters (*apragmōn*), has little business to attend to (*oligopragmōn*), and takes care only of his own affairs (*ta hautou prattein*), because having little business (*oligopragmosunē*) and caring only of his own affairs (*autopragia*) are characteristic of being *asteios*. This term is frequently used by Chrysippus, and while etymologically, the phrase means "urban" or "civilized", in Chrysippus' usage it frequently denotes the wise or virtuous person. Cherniss translates it as "decency",⁹ Goodwin renders it as "civil persons",¹⁰ and in the Hungarian translation we find the equivalent of "a delicate lifestyle".¹¹ Julia Annas, on the other hand, states that "in ancient philosophical discussions 'the sage' is used interchangeably with 'the good person' (*ho agathos*), and 'the virtuous person' (*ho spoudaios, ho asteios*)".¹² While it is extremely difficult to tell apart what exact words Chrysippus used in his original writings and what appellation was given by the later authors when they transmitted

8 All English translations of the *St. Rep.* are Cherniss', unless otherwise stated.

9 Cherniss 1973, 491.

10 Goodwin 1874

11 W. Salgo 1983, 350.

12 Annas 2008, 11.

Chrysippus' theories in their own words, it seems from the Chrysippian fragments that *spoudaios* is mainly used by later commentators when transmitting Chrysippus' thoughts in paraphrases, while *sophos*, *phronimos* and *asteios* were used by Chrysippus himself on the basis of the direct quotes that have been preserved. When Chrysippus uses the term *asteios*, it is frequently contrasted with *phaulos*, the simple, common person who lacks virtue and is consequently vicious. Regarding the differences of Plutarch's paraphrase and the direct quote from Chrysippus, Harold Cherniss, the translator and editor of the Loeb edition, signals them in a footnote and adds: "There is no more reason to change this [*idiopragmona*] to *oligopragmona* as Reiske did or *oligopragmona* in the direct quotation to *idiopragmona* as Pohlenz does than there is to change *sophon* in Plutarch's paraphrase to *phronimon* or the latter in the direct quotation to *sophon*."¹³

Not only does Plutarch reprehend Chrysippus on the basis of the contradiction about whether the Stoic philosopher attributes a public or a secluded and private lifestyle to the sage, but he also rushes to remark poignantly that the life of tranquillity that Chrysippus advocates is a well-known tenet of a rival philosophical school, that of Epicureanism. Plutarch uses a juxtaposition to ridicule Chrysippus when, after quoting his sentence "not many realize this" (that tranquil life is secure), he adds that Epicurus certainly does (1043B), thus hinting at the possibility of equating the concept of a tranquil life in Epicureanism and in Stoicism, which seems absurd. Plutarch emphasizes this absurdity by adding that in Epicurus' system, staying away from (public, or in this case rather human) matters (*apragmosunē*) is achieved most perfectly by the gods, who consequently do not exercise divine providence (*pronoia*) over human beings (1043B). In Stoic cosmology, however, providence is the most fundamental governing principle. Consequently, the abstinence from actions is in contradiction with the cosmological principle – at least this is what Plutarch seems to suggest by his daring juxtaposition with Epicureanism.

Plutarch continues to find faults with Chrysippus quoting him that a wise man can assume kingship and is allowed to live with kings (1043C). Here, just as above, Plutarch uses the term *sophos*, but does not quote the term used by Chrysippus. Two main problems accompany this statement. The first is the motive for kingship, namely, gaining financial benefit. The second is that Chrysippus admits that wise men are allowed to join the courts of non-virtuous kings as well. Chrysippus uses the term *prokekophotos* (1043D), the perfect participle of *prokoptō*, the present participle (*prokoptōn*) of which is the standard term in Stoicism for the morally progressing person, one who is not a sage yet but is on his way to becoming one.¹⁴ This compromise on

¹³ Cherniss 1976, 491fn. b.

¹⁴ It is the *communis opinio* of scholars that the concept of moral progress and the person who is progressive (*prokoptōn*) is a later development in Stoicism as an answer to the fervent criticism from adversaries about the too sharply cut division between the perfect and idealized sage and the non-virtuous person, who is basically everyone else, except for the sage with no intermediate state. To fill this gap, the concept of the morally pro-

Chrysippus' part could allow wise men to live together with and advise leaders who are morally questionable. This means another self-contradiction in Chrysippus' thought according to Plutarch: is the wise man to socialize with similar wise men, or is he to spend time with vicious people due to his greed for money? Here, Plutarch exaggerates again. Chrysippus uses the phrase "we admit" (1043C–D)¹⁵ but Plutarch in his ironic paraphrase writes "Chrysippus thrusts the sage headlong into Panticapaeum".¹⁶

So far there has been one main contradiction with several corollaries, i.e. secluded life versus participating in public affairs. The following paradoxes arise from this central contradiction: 1. its similarity to the rival Epicurean school; 2. this moral tenet of a tranquil life involves a contradiction to Stoic cosmology, inasmuch as this consequently leads to the denial of divine providence (a far-fetched consequence one must admit, still Plutarch plays it down against Chrysippus); 3. assuming kingship as part of public affairs out of lust for money; 4. association with morally backward people. Plutarch elaborates on the kings one is supposed to be an adviser of. Chrysippus names two kings well-known for their moral stance and ethical behaviour as good examples of what kind of kings one should attend: Idyntharsus, the Scythian king and Leuco of Pontus. Later he adds that other kings might be joined, too, without giving names. Plutarch interprets this concession as if Chrysippus urged the wise man to "go riding with the

gressed person (*prokoptōn*) was created. He is one who acts according to virtues but has not attained sagehood yet. If the term really is a later development only, this participle here can be a precursor to it.

15 ἡμῶνδὲ καὶ ταῦτ' ἀπολείποντων. My translation above. This complete direct quotation gives the impression that Chrysippus, too had certain reservations about associations with kings: "ὅτι γὰρ φησὶ 'καὶ στρατεύεται μετὰ δυναστῶν καὶ βιώσεται, πάλιν ἐπισκεψόμεθα τούτων ἐχόμενοι, τινῶν μὲν οὐδὲ ταῦτ' ὑπονοούντων διὰ τοὺς ὁμοίους ὑπολογισμούς, ἡμῶν δὲ καὶ ταῦτ' ἀπολείποντων διὰ τοὺς παραπλησίους λόγους." For holding fast to these [what?], let us consider again that he [probably the wise man, but no appellation is present in the quote] would go campaigning and would live with the powerful, while on the one hand some do not even suspect these things due to similar considerations, and while on the other hand, we concede these things, too, due to nearly equal reasons. (1043C–D; my translation) The word "concede" (*ἀπολείπω*) signals that Chrysippus does not require the wise man to live with kings but simply allows him to do so. The subject of the sentence is not directly stated in Plutarch's quotation and we may only ponder whether Chrysippus used the word *sophos*, *phronimos*, or another term. The expression "some do not even suspect it may mean that others do not think that the sage can participate in public affairs, thus hinting at Epicureans. Although the verb *ὑπονοέω* is most probably used here in the simple meaning of "think", it is perhaps worth to remember that in the original meaning of the term the connotation of "suspect" is also present, which might bear the connotation that the object of the verb is something disdainful, so if "we", the Stoics allow it, we are aware that it is not a unanimously accepted and supported activity. It is unfortunate that we do not know what he means by "holding fast to these", which was probably expounded by him in the previous sentences. In summary, this direct quotation suggests that this concession about associating with kings was not the first option for a wise man, even for Chrysippus, but we can only guess what his reservations were. It is also possible that Plutarch interprets this correctly, and regarding financial gain, being a king yields more profit than being only associated with one, and this is the reason why it is only a second option, i.e. a compromise for Chrysippus. For the precise and correct interpretation of this passage, my sincere gratitude goes to Prof. Gabor Bolonyai.

16 1043D: ὁ δὲ Χρύσιππος ἔνεκα χρηματισμοῦ τὸν σοφὸν ἐπὶ κεφαλῆν ἐξ Παντικάπειου ὠθεῖ καὶ τῆν Σκυθῶν ἐρημίαν. Goodwin's translation.

Scythians and minding the business of tyrants in the Bosphorus” (1043C). Here, as in other places, too, Plutarch selects freely from Chrysippus’ writings, and the reader has difficulty reconstructing what the original intention of Chrysippus might have been. It can be concluded from Plutarch’s stylistic devices and his tone that he might consciously misinterpret some passages or exaggerates them to the extreme in order to create absurdity and inconsistency within the Stoic philosopher’s system of thought. In contrast to this Chrysippian suggestion about associating with kings, Plutarch lists philosophers in relation to Alexander the Great, and concludes that the public opinion was that those philosophers are to be praised who denied Alexander’s invitation, and the one who sought his favours is to be reprimanded. With this Plutarch indicates that it is not only his personal dislike of Chrysippus’ suggestion, but the *communis opinio*, or else the common moral values that refrain from associating with tyrants.

In the second half of Chapter 20, Plutarch moves on to the question of the wise man and money-making as the second central contradiction. Being a king or an associate is already part of this, but now the question of money-making is in focus, again along with further contradictions following from the central topic. Plutarch repeats the three types of making money according to Chrysippus: by being a king, by having friends and by teaching not some specific knowledge but virtue in general. Plutarch examines this third type of earning advised by Chrysippus, *sophisteia*. While *philosophia* is a positive branch of knowledge and pastime, *sophisteia* is just the opposite, as it denotes the art and exhibition of false or deceiving knowledge. Even when used in a wider sense, just as here, to denote moral teaching, it still bears a pejorative connotation. Besides the central contradiction of whether the wise man despises money, or he does whatever he can to earn it, other questions also arise. First, the question of whether it is fitting to the wise person to teach virtue for money. The second problem is that according to Chrysippus, the wise man should ask for the tuition before he starts teaching. Plutarch also reprehends that the master does not promise to be effective in teaching, but only to do “whatever he can”, which means he would ask for money even if his teaching was not effective (1044A).

Let us refer to the distinction between *sophos* and *phronimos* again. Which appellation does Chrysippus use in the context of *sophisteia*? Neither. He uses a third phrase: “those who have brains” or “who are at their senses” (*hoi noun ekhontes*)¹⁷ when he explains that they will know when to collect tuition. This phrase gives the impression that he talks not so much about wise men, but about everyday intelligent people. It is true, however, that Stobaeus gives a list of occupations recommended for a sage, and these are the same as on Chrysippus’ list (see below). It is also true that most early Stoic philosophers were teachers or held lectures. It is also true that Zeno regarded himself a sage, but from Chrysippus on, Stoic philosophers did not consider themselves sages

17 1044A: οἱ νοῦν ἔχοντες.

but admitted that there was no living being who lived up to their concept of the ideal sage. Therefore, this historical fact cannot be used to prove whether Chrysippus really meant that the sage can be a sophist at the same time. Plutarch also sees a contradiction in Chrysippus' advice to draw a contract between the master and the student so that no harm could affect the master. This contradicts his other statement according to which the wise man cannot be subject to any kind of injustice. Plutarch concludes his chapters on the Stoic sage by exposing this contradiction between the written contract for money and the postulation that no harm that can afflict a wise man.

Plutarch addresses the question of injustice and harm and its self-contradiction in Chrysippus' writings in Chapter 16 of *De Stoicorum repugnantiis*. In 1041D, he quotes two different parts of *Demonstrations* by Chrysippus at length. In the first quote, Chrysippus asserts that whoever injures another man also does harm to himself. In the second, Chrysippus writes the following: "He who is injured by another injures himself and injures himself undeservedly. This, however, is to do injustice. Therefore, everyone who is done injustice by anyone at all does himself injustice." This second quote is so clearly in contradiction with the first one and also, it contradicts common sense so much that it presented a puzzle even to the most erudite commentators. Pohlenz takes it as an Academic¹⁸ parody of Chrysippus, which Plutarch understands literally.¹⁹ Later Stoics, such as Marcus Aurelius²⁰ can help us understand this seemingly senseless statement. Harm in the truest sense of the word can be done only to one's soul. When somebody does injustice to another person, he does harm to his belongings, his reputation or his body. All these are external possessions only. It is only the soul that can suffer real harm, and each soul is accessible solely to its possessor. Therefore, soul can suffer harm only from the person who possesses it, this is how one should understand that all harm is done to oneself.

Regardless of this contradiction, it is well-attested that the Stoics thought that the wise man cannot suffer injury or harm. The reasoning behind this statement goes as follows: real harm can be done only to the moral integrity of a person. Since the wise man is already perfect, he cannot suffer injury. Furthermore, Cherniss also adds that Chrysippus might have argued that injury occurs as a reaction to the victim's nature, and this is completely impossible in the case of the sage.²¹ Consequently, as Plutarch rightly describes, there is an inner contradiction between the sage, who is free from injustice and the *sophistēs*, who writes a contract to ensure that he will stay free from injustice, which is a type of harm according to Plutarch.

18 The school of Plato's Academy, one of the main opponents of Stoicism.

19 Cherniss 1976, 480.

20 *Med.* 4. 39, 4. 49a, 5. 19, 7. 14, 7. 26, 7. 41, 8. 55, 8. 56, 9. 42.

21 Cherniss 1976, 480.

2. Attempting a consistent interpretation

Is it possible to reconcile these contradictions? Could the arbitrarily excerpted quotations make sense if the whole Chrysippian corpus was available? Albeit this question is unanswerable, it is still possible to examine the two central questions. One is the sage's selection between private or public way of life, and the other concerns his attitude towards money. Writings of later Stoic thinkers and other available testimonies of Stoic thought may shed light on these questions.

It seems that one way to resolve these contradictions lies in the idea and characteristics of the Stoic sage. Brouwer provides two different definitions for the concept of the sage in Stoicism. The first is the "knowledge of human and divine matters" and the second is "fitting expertise" which implies a stable disposition of the knower.²² In both cases the sage is perfectly virtuous and perfectly knowledgeable. He knows that it is only virtue that has value. He understands the cosmic law (*logos*) and exists and acts in consistence with it (*sympatheia*). Wisdom is a stable state of the soul that recognized the divine providence and the cosmic law and regards everything external indifferent to his well-being. Having reached this state, the sage continues to act in the world, albeit with an attitude of *apatheia*, emotional non-attachment, and a knowledge of real values and laws. Due to *oikeiōsis*, appropriation, the wise person is aware of what belongs to him (self, body, family, city, country, cosmos) and it is in accordance with nature to be beneficial to what belongs to one. This is the key to why the sage would be beneficial to others and promote virtue around him. This is why he can take part in public affairs. This is why he can be a teacher and act as an advisor to friends. It can be true that he also enjoys the life of tranquillity, but whenever it comes his way, he accepts the political role. Diogenes Laertius writes that Chrysippus states in the first book of his *Ways of Living* that the sage participates in public affairs "for they say that he will restrain vice and promote virtue."²³ This is consistent in all of the Stoic teachings. The question should be asked rather the other way round: how could Chrysippus extol a tranquil and secluded life? It seems that he simply said that the wise man would accept kingship if it came his way – which is not the same as directly ordering the sage to be a king or pursue this possibility, or any other of the three options. These possibilities plus the fourth, the tranquil and retired life, are only options out of which anything can be chosen, as none of them is better or worse than the others. These options represent mere possibilities and not injunctions in any hierarchical order.

Participating in politics in distant kingdoms is also coherent with the Stoic concept of the *cosmopolis*. According to the Stoic *cosmopolis* concept, a polis is a place where

²² Brouwer 2014, 7. DL 7. 121.

²³ Brown 2006, 551.

human beings live and is put into order by law.²⁴ There is only one place which is put into order by law, i.e. right reason, and that is the cosmos as a whole. Brown accounts for Chrysippus' endorsement of the sage participating in foreign politics' affairs as a sign of benefaction to humanity as a whole, as a sign of true cosmopolitanism, with the motto "Think globally! Act locally!"²⁵ Zeno's two students are historical examples of this advice given by Chrysippus. Diogenes Laertius in his book about Zeno tells the story of Persaeus of Citium (307/6 – 243).²⁶ Persaeus might have been sent to Zeno as a slave and secretary by king Antigonos II Gonatas of Macedonia. When later the same Antigonos invited Zeno to his court, the old philosopher sent his student Persaeus, who gained prominence in the king's court. He became the tutor of the heir to the throne, and after Antigonos captured Corinth, Persaeus was given control of the city. Another student of Zeno, Sphaerus of Borysthenes, joined the court of king Cleomenes III of Sparta and became his first advisor and a supporter of his reform programs.²⁷ These examples support the Chrysippian precept of staying in royal courts as advisors.²⁸ We must admit, however, that Plutarch is right when he states the following at the beginning of his essay (1033D): "Who, then, grew old in this scholastic life if not Chrysippus and Cleanthes and Diogenes and Zeno and Antipater?" All the principal founders of Stoicism, while theorizing about the sage's involvement in politics, stayed out of public affairs themselves. One can respond to this that with the exception of Zeno and Diogenes (who was not a Stoic but *the* Cynic philosopher), none of the above-mentioned thinkers regarded themselves as sages.

The key to the contradictions concerning financial matters is the concept of *proëgmēna*, i.e. preferred indifferent.²⁹ There are external objects which are indifferent to virtue (*adiaphora*) and thus indifferent to happiness and wisdom but which are in accordance with nature (*phusis*) and the cosmic law, hence are to be chosen. Having attained wisdom, the wise man is free to select anything that is in accordance with virtue and nature while not being touched by any external possession or event. His wisdom is a psychological attitude, a stable disposition. Since wealth is in accordance with nature, it belongs to the category of preferred indifferent (*proëgmēna*). As wealth is to be selected, it is completely appropriate for Chrysippus to write about the modes of gaining wealth and the precautions against financial loss.

24 SVF 3. 327; Brown 2006, 552.

25 Brown 2006, 554.

26 DL VII. 6. 9; Dorandi 2008, 39.

27 Dorandi 2008, 40.

28 Let us also refer to the most famous representative of Stoicism, who embodied the ideal of the politician-sage: Marcus Aurelius, the Roman emperor. His teacher, Seneca, was also a Stoic philosopher, politician, and teacher, thus giving an example to what Plutarch asks of the early Stoic thinkers: harmony of life and thought.

29 Inwood 1985, 204–5.

Stoic thinkers, including Chrysippus, regarded wealth as a preferred indifferent. Plutarch in the same work cites Chrysippus writing “the sage will speak in public and participate in government just as if he considered wealth to be a good and reputation and health likewise” (1034B).³⁰ As it results from the category of preferred indifferent, this is exactly what Chrysippus thought. Stobaeus writes that the sage alone is the master of both *oikonomikē*, the “theoretical and practical state of mind in regard to the things advantageous to the household” and *khrēmatistikē*, “experience in the acquisition of money from the right sources”.³¹ Stobaeus gives a list of three modes of life³² which is identical to Chrysippus’ list of the sources of gaining wealth. Other Stoic philosophers, such as Ariston, Zenon and Sphaerus, are recorded to have written essays about wealth.³³ Antipater advises a young man to teach his wife about *oikonomikē*, so that he can be free to spend his time on philosophy and politics.³⁴ Regarding injustice and harm, the same reasoning can be used to resolve the contradiction. As acquiring wealth is a thing indifferent to virtue but is in accordance with nature and is consequently an object to be chosen, similarly its opposite, the loss of money is against nature, so it should be avoided. Even though it is not essential to one’s being a sage, there is no problem with his efforts to prevent it. There is no contradiction in these tenets, as Chrysippus does not talk about harm to the sage, but only about injustice.

3. Plutarch’s malevolence

It seems that Plutarch used mainly Chrysippus’ writings and neglected other sources that could have been available to him. His logic probably was that once he refuted the tenets of the most prominent representatives and founding figures, he supplied enough evidence to prove that the system of whole school was fallacious.

Having inspected other sources and summarized the general tenets of Stoicism about the idea of the sage, it seems that Chrysippus’ statements which Plutarch reprehended the most are truly in consistence with the canonical teachings of Stoicism. As for earning money through engagement either in politics (as a king, an advisor or through friends) or in lecturing – we have found that the professions Plutarch criticizes were all consistent with the widely accepted and repeated characteristics of the sage according to Stoicism. What is more interesting is that Plutarch himself led a life which

30 οὕτω ῥητορεύσειν καὶ πολιτεύσεσθαι τὸν σοφόν, ὡς καὶ τοῦ πλοῦτου ὄντος ἀγαθοῦ καὶ τῆς δόξης καὶ τῆς ὑγιείας.

31 Stob. III. 623, quoted by Brunt 2013, 51.

32 Stob. II. 109. 10–24, quoted by Brunt, 2013, 51.

33 Brunt 2013, 50–51.

34 Stob. III. 256. 4ff., quoted by Brunt 2013, 52.

echoed these principles.³⁵ Thus, what is strange in the Stoic system is not the appraisal of public life but Chrysippus' exaltation of the tranquil lifestyle. Concerning the question of money, it is also clear that they listed wealth among the *proēgmenon*, and consequently, this is not such a fundamental contradiction, even if we accept that the sage does not need any external wealth. We have seen that Plutarch often exaggerates Chrysippus' statements and interprets them differently by shifting the emphasis in some passages or sentences. Finally, contrary to our more or less successful efforts to reconcile the different statements found in Chrysippus' oeuvre, it can be stated that the contradictions Plutarch finds in Chrysippus regarding the Stoic concept of the sage are most probably present. At the same time, however, these contradictions constitute the core of Stoic thought, which, albeit incomprehensible with an everyday common sense attitude, is consistent with their special philosophical system in which cosmology and ethics are closely interconnected.

35 Cf. Russell 1973, 5–7.

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