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Is God a Mindless Vegetable?

Cudworth on Stoic Theology

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Abstract

In the sixteenth century the Stoics were deemed friends of humanist Christians, but by the eighteenth century they were attacked as atheists. What happened in the intervening period? In the middle of this period falls Ralph Cudworth's *True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678), which contains a sustained analysis of Stoic theology. In Cudworth's complex taxonomy Stoicism appears twice, both as a form of atheism and an example of imperfect theism. Whether the Stoics are theists or atheists hinges on whether their God is conscious and intelligent, or alive but unconscious like a plant or vegetable. Is God sentient or is he a mindless vegetable?

In the late sixteenth century a number of influential writers claimed Stoicism to be compatible with Christianity but by the mid eighteenth century Stoicism was associated with atheism. What happened during the course of the reception of Stoicism in the intervening period? While it remains unclear who was the first person to call the Stoics atheists, there is no doubt that the most philosophically sustained analysis of Stoic theology during this period is to be found in Ralph Cudworth's *True Intellectual System of the Universe*, published in 1678. Cudworth's aim in this work is to catalogue and then attack all existing forms of atheism and one of the four principal forms of atheism he identifies he calls 'Stoical'. However, in Cudworth's complex taxonomy of different forms of theism and atheism, Stoicism appears twice, first as a form of atheism but also as a form of imperfect theism. The aim of this study is to examine Cudworth's claims about Stoic theology, assessing their fairness, but also placing them within the wider context of the early modern reception of Stoicism.

From Theism to Atheism

In 1598 Thomas James, the first Librarian of the Bodleian and translator of the ‘Neostoic’ author Guillaume Du Vair, proclaimed that ‘no kinde of philosophie is more profitable and nearer approaching unto Christianitie than the philosophie of the Stoicks’.¹ In making this claim James was following Du Vair who, in turn, was following in the wake of the Belgian Humanist Justus Lipsius. Lipsius, in his dialogue *De Constantia* of 1584, had attempted to revive ancient Stoicism in a form that would be palatable to a modern Christian audience.² In order to do so, Lipsius pointed out certain parts of the Stoic system – primarily relating to the roles of fate and providence – that would need to be amended,³ but by and large Lipsius was at one with Bodley’s librarian in proclaiming that Stoicism was not only compatible with Christianity, but was in fact the most appropriate philosophical system for a Classically-educated Christian to adopt.

By 1765 – just over a century and a half later – Stoicism had undergone a dramatic transformation. Far from being the most ‘godly and christianly’⁴ philosophy that Lipsius, James, and others had presented to the public in the late sixteenth century, Stoicism was now presented by Diderot and d’Alembert in their *Encyclopédie* as a form of materialism, determinism, and

¹ Thomas James, ‘Dedicatory Epistle’, prefacing his 1598 translation of Du Vair’s *Philosophie morale des Stoiques*, in G. Du Vair, *The Moral Philosophie of the Stoicks*, edited by R. Kirk, translated by T. James (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1951), 45.

² J. Lipsius, *De Constantia Libri Duo, Qui alloquium praecipue continent in Publicis malis* (Leiden, 1584); translated in *On Constancy*, edited by J. Sellars, translated by J. Stradling (Exeter: Bristol Phoenix Press, 2006).

³ See e.g. Lipsius, *De Constantia* 1.20.

⁴ This phrase comes from James Sanford’s ‘Epistle’ to Queen Elizabeth in his *The Manuell of Epictetus, Translated out of Greeke into French, and now into English* (London, 1567), and is used in relation to Epictetus.

atheism.⁵ And they were by no means alone in this assessment, building as they were upon the judgements of earlier eighteenth century writers, such as the famous German historian of philosophy Jacob Brucker.⁶

The reasons for this dramatic and unexpected shift in the assessment of Stoicism are of course complex. One important strand appears to have been a move away from reading the primarily moral works of the late Stoic authors Seneca and Epictetus (as Lipsius and Du Vair had done) and towards a concern with the fragments of the earlier Stoics such as Zeno and Chrysippus. This shift is especially clear in Brucker's history, which warns readers not to be impressed by the apparently noble accounts of God, the soul, and other topics in Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius without first gaining a proper understanding of the philosophical principles that stand behind them. It is only by grasping Stoicism as a philosophical system that we shall be able to judge it properly, and we can only do that via a patient reconstruction of the doctrines of the early Stoa involving the collation of fragments from the doxographical reports of Diogenes Laertius, Cicero, Plutarch, Sextus Empiricus, and others.⁷ The irony in all

⁵ See *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire Raisonné des Sciences, des Arts et des Métiers*, 17 vols (Neufchâtel, 1751-65), vol. 15, 528: 'Il n'est pas difficile de conclure de ces principes, que les stoïciens étoient matérialistes, fatalistes, & à proprement parler athées'.

⁶ See J. Brucker's *Historia Critica Philosophiae*, 6 vols (Leipzig, 1742-7), esp. vol. 1, 893-967. An abridged translation can be found in W. Enfield, *The History of Philosophy [...] Drawn up From Brucker's Historia Critica Philosophiae*, 2 vols (London, 1819), vol. 1, 315-51. For further discussion of the reception of Stoicism during this period see especially two studies by C. Brooke: 'Stoicism and Anti-Stoicism in the Seventeenth Century', in *Grotius and the Stoa*, edited by H. W. Blom and L. C. Winkel, *Grotiana* 22/23 (Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2004), 93-115, and 'How the Stoics Became Atheists', *The Historical Journal* 49 (2006), 387-402.

⁷ See Brucker, *Historia Critica Philosophiae*, vol. 1, 909 (in the translation of Enfield, vol. 1, 323): 'Great care should be taken, in the first place, not to judge of the doctrine of the Stoics from words and sentiments, detached from the general system, but to consider them as they stand related to the whole train of premises and conclusions. For want of this caution, many moderns, dazzled by the splendid expressions which they have met with in the writings of the Stoics concerning God, the soul, and other subjects, have imagined that they have discovered an invaluable treasure: whereas, if they had taken the pains to restore these brilliants to their proper places in the general mass, it would soon

this, of course, is that it was Lipsius himself who laid the foundations for this shift when he made the first systematic attempt to gather together the fragments of the Stoics in a pair of sourcebooks published in 1604 and conceived as companion pieces to his edition of Seneca published the following year.⁸

An equally important strand was the way in which Stoicism as a philosophical position was often brought into contemporary philosophical debates, especially those concerning determinism, fate, and providence. At precisely the time that attention was shifting away from the high-minded morals of Epictetus and Seneca towards the physical doctrines of the early Stoa, the late seventeenth century philosophical scene was coming to terms with the works of Hobbes and then Spinoza, who were of course to become the two great anti-heroes of the Enlightenment.⁹ Before long both Hobbes and Spinoza were branded ‘Stoics’ by some of their contemporary critics, and so the fate of Stoicism became intertwined with the fates of Hobbism and (in particular) Spinozism.

have appeared, that a great part of their value was imaginary’ (*expedenda esse verba & sententias Stoicorum non extra systematis nexum, sed juncto toto consequentiarum syrmate, quo ex principiis semel admissis conclusions derivantur, Accidit enim viris magnis, ut speciosis Stoicorum dictis de Deo, de animo, de officiis seducti, nescio quos thesaurus se invenisse putaverint, qui intra systematis nexum & ex vero eius sensu considerati carbones exhibebant*). Brucker goes on to suggest, vol. 1, 911 (in Enfield, vol. 1, 324), that the works of Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius are not adequate to illustrate the essential doctrines of Stoicism; to do that one must examine the reports in Cicero, Plutarch, Diogenes Laertius, Sextus Empiricus, Simplicius, and Stobaeus.

⁸ See J. Lipsius, *Manuductionis ad Stoicam Philosophiam Libri Tres* (Antwerp, 1604) and *Physiologiae Stoicorum Libri Tres* (Antwerp, 1604), with the discussion in J. L. Saunders, *Justus Lipsius: The Philosophy of Renaissance Stoicism* (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1955).

⁹ On Hobbes and Spinoza in the Enlightenment see e.g. S. I. Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan: Seventeenth-Century Reactions to the Materialism and Moral Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962) and J. I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) respectively. Note also Samuel Clarke’s contemporary polemic, in S. Clarke, *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God, More Particularly in Answer to Mr Hobbs, Spinoza, and their Followers*, The Ninth Edition (London, 1738).

It is precisely this sort of dialogue between the ancient and the modern that marks Ralph Cudworth's monumental *True Intellectual System of the Universe* (hereafter *TIS*), published in 1678.¹⁰ This work deserves to stand alongside Hobbes's *Leviathan* and Locke's *Essay* as the third great work of seventeenth century English philosophy. It has not received that accolade as widely as it might, no doubt in part due to its length (900 folio pages), but also due to its detailed and extensive (if not laborious and relentless) quotation from and discussion of a bewildering array of ancient philosophical texts, from the earliest Presocratics through to the last Neoplatonists. In his *Thoughts Concerning Education*, John Locke praised *TIS* as a veritable encyclopaedia of ancient philosophy.¹¹ Cudworth's later editor, Thomas Birch, called the *TIS* 'the most valuable treasure of the ancient theology and philosophy extant in any language'.¹² Against the grain of the new emerging style of philosophical writing, Cudworth harks

¹⁰ R. Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe: The First Part, Wherein all the Reason and Philosophy of Atheism is Confuted and its Impossibility Demonstrated* (London, 1678). An abridged version by Thomas Wise was published in 1706 and a Latin translation with notes by J. L. Mosheim was published in 1733. A second English edition by Thomas Birch was published in 1743 and this was reissued in 1820. A new edition in 1845 included Mosheim's notes, translated from the Latin by John Harrison. I have consulted the 1678 edition, the 1820 edition, and the Thoemmes Press reprint of the 1845 edition, introduced by G. A. J. Rogers. All references are to ch. and § but I also supply the pagination for the first edition of 1678 and the 1820 edition (which is the only edition currently in print, via Elibron Classics, 2003), citing both by date.

¹¹ See J. Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (London, 1693), in the modern edition *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, edited by J. W. and J. S. Yolton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 248: 'He that would look farther back, and acquaint himself with the several Opinions of the Ancients, may consult Dr. *Cudworth's Intellectual System*; wherein that very learned Author hath with such Accurateness and Judgment collected and explained the Opinions of the Greek Philosophers, that what Principles they built on, and what were the chief Hypotheses, that divided them, is better to be seen in him, than any where else that I know'.

¹² T. Birch, in R. Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* [...] The Second Edition [...] with] an account of the life and writings of the author by Thomas Birch (London, 1743), v.

back to the spirit of Renaissance Humanism.¹³ The *TIS* was published roughly in the middle of the period during which Stoicism was transformed from theism to atheism (i.e. 1584-1765). It also contains what must be the most sustained discussion of Stoic theology from the early modern period. On the journey from theism to atheism, then, Cudworth's discussion stands as a key moment in the reception of Stoicism.

The True Intellectual System

Before turning to the details of Cudworth's account of Stoicism it may be helpful to have a clearer idea of both his own philosophical outlook and the task that he set himself in the *TIS*. Cudworth was, of course, one of the Cambridge Platonists.¹⁴ To describe him simply as a Platonist, however, does not begin to do justice to the complexities of his philosophy. A more accurate label might be Cartesian Neoplatonist, for it is the Neoplatonic tradition inaugurated by Plotinus that formed the central influence, combined with a commitment to Cartesian dualism.¹⁵ Cudworth's own

¹³ By contrast, Hobbes's *Leviathan* appears thoroughly modern, with very few explicit classical references. However, Q. Skinner, *Visions of Politics 3: Hobbes and Civil Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), ch. 2, has argued that Hobbes too should be seen within the context of Humanism.

¹⁴ For general introductions to Cudworth and/or the Cambridge Platonists see (highly selective, and in chronological order): C. E. Lowrey, *The Philosophy of Ralph Cudworth: A Study of the True Intellectual System of the Universe* (New York, 1884); F. J. Powicke, *The Cambridge Platonists: A Study* (London: Dent, 1926); J. H. Muirhead, *The Platonic Tradition in Anglo-Saxon Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1931), chs 1-3; J. A. Passmore, *Ralph Cudworth: An Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951); E. Cassirer, *The Platonic Renaissance in England*, translated by J. P. Pettegrove [a translation of *Die Platonische Renaissance in England und die Schule von Cambridge* first published in 1932] (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1953); S. Hutton, 'Lord Herbert of Cherbury and the Cambridge Platonists', in *British Philosophy and the Age of Enlightenment*, edited by S. Brown, Routledge History of Philosophy Vol. V (London: Routledge, 1996), 20-42; G. A. J. Rogers, J. M. Vienne, Y.-C. Zarka (eds.), *The Cambridge Platonists in Philosophical Context* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1997); S. Hutton, 'The Cambridge Platonists', in *A Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*, edited by S. Nadler (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 308-19.

¹⁵ See L. Gysi, *Platonism and Cartesianism in the Philosophy of Ralph Cudworth* (Bern: Herbert Lang, 1962) and D. B. Sailor, 'Cudworth and Descartes', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 23 (1962), 133-40.

metaphysics comprises God, a mechanical atomistic nature, and, between the two, immaterial souls and an unconscious, animate ‘plastic nature’ that orders the inert physical world according to God’s providence and emanates from Him in a Neoplatonic fashion. For Cudworth mechanical atomism need not undermine the immaterial soul or God; on the contrary such a philosophy *requires* such entities in order to explain the movement of inanimate matter, either as a first cause or in the form of more regular intervention.

As well as a commitment to the existence of God, Cudworth is equally committed to the objective existence of moral values and to freedom of the will. His philosophy is thus concerned with supporting these three claims and, as importantly, attacking their opposites, namely atheism, moral relativism, and determinism. Cudworth’s *magnum opus*, the *True Intellectual System of the Universe*, was conceived in three parts, each concerned with one of these key philosophical disputes: theism versus atheism, moral objectivism versus relativism, and liberty versus necessity.¹⁶ The book that was published under the title *True Intellectual System* in 1678 is, despite its length, only the first part of the projected work, and so subtitled *The First Part Wherein all the Reason and Philosophy of Atheism is Confuted and its Impossibility Demonstrated*. It was in fact the final part of his project, concerned with liberty and necessity, that Cudworth held to be most urgent, and so the analysis of atheism forms (in the words of Cassirer) ‘a gigantic fragment’ that was simply part of a preamble towards the main task.¹⁷ In the opening lines of the Preface to the *TIS* Cudworth confesses that ‘when I engaged the press, I intended only a discourse concerning liberty and necessity, or, to speak out more plainly, against the fatal

¹⁶ See Cudworth’s Preface in *TIS*, as printed in Cudworth (1820), vol. 1, 47.

¹⁷ Cassirer, *The Platonic Renaissance in England*, 42.

necessity of all actions and events'.¹⁸ While atheism and moral relativism are naturally just as pernicious as determinism to Cudworth, he is primarily concerned about the rise of determinism for it seems to him to lead inevitably on to the other two vices. Determinism, a doctrine sometimes thought to be compatible with Christian belief, in fact undermines our notions of praise and blame and so makes punishment, in the form of the day of judgement, redundant. Consequently it undermines both our morality and our fear of God. It is for these reasons that the battle between liberty and necessity stands as Cudworth's principal philosophical concern.

Although Cudworth only published the first part and never issued the second and third parts that would have dealt with morality and liberty, he left behind a substantial number of manuscripts, extracts of which were published posthumously. Drafts of material destined for the second part were published in 1731 as *A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality*, while one of a number of manuscripts dealing with liberty and necessity now held in The British Library was published in 1838 as *A Treatise of Freewill*.¹⁹ So, although Cudworth never finished the *TIS* in the form that he intended, his three published philosophical works do give us a good sense of what it would have contained if it had been completed.

The Refutation of Atheism

In the work we know as the *TIS*, the task is to refute atheism. In order to deal with atheism, Cudworth's method is to gather together the various

¹⁸ *TIS* Pref. ((1678), fol. A3 r.; (1820), vol. 1, 43).

¹⁹ These two works can now be found in R. Cudworth, *A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality with A Treatise of Freewill*, edited by S. Hutton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). The latter was edited out of MSS now held in the British Library (BL Addit. 4978-82), on which see Passmore, *Ralph Cudworth*, 110-13.

arguments for atheism that have been advanced throughout the history of philosophy and to refute them one by one. But as a consummate scholar, this method demands that Cudworth supply all of the existing arguments for atheism, properly documented, before turning to refute them. Ironically, what we find in the *TIS* is arguably the finest history of philosophical atheism ever written, a veritable textbook of atheism.²⁰ In fact, some of his contemporaries came to a similar assessment, attacking him for stating the reasons in favour of atheism a little too clearly, as Shaftesbury noted in his attempt to defend Cudworth.²¹

There is no question, however, that Cudworth might have been some form of atheist in disguise. While we might question the strict orthodoxy of Cudworth's own theology there is little doubt that he was a devoted Christian. His entire philosophical project is directed towards combating contemporary forms of atheism and especially philosophies that combined atheism with determinism.²² His central target is probably Hobbes.²³

²⁰ Detailed philosophical responses have often proved counterproductive: Galen inadvertently preserved important information about Stoic psychology otherwise lost in his polemic against it in *De Placiticis Hippocratis et Platonis*, and John Philoponus did the same for Proclus in his *Contra Proclum*.

²¹ See A. A. Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, edited by L. E. Klein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 264-5: 'You know the common fate of those who dare to appear fair authors. What was that pious and learned man's case who wrote *The Intellectual System of the Universe*? I confess it was pleasant enough to consider that, though the whole world were no less satisfied with his capacity and learning than with his sincerity in the cause of deity, yet was he accused of giving the upper hand to the atheists for having only stated their reasons and those of their adversaries fairly together.' On the reception of Cudworth see R. L. Colie, *Light and Enlightenment: A Study of the Cambridge Platonists and the Dutch Arminians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 117-44, and J. Redwood, *Reason, Ridicule, and Religion: The Age of Enlightenment in England 1660-1750* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), 50-60.

²² Cudworth holds that these two doctrines naturally belong together, stating that 'there can be nothing more absurd, than for an atheist to assert liberty of the will' (*TIS* Pref. ((1678), fol. *v.; (1820), vol. 1, 52), reading 'than' with the 1820 edition, in place of 'then' in the 1678 edition).

²³ On Cudworth's treatment of Hobbes see Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan*, 96-102, 126-33; Y.-C. Zarka, 'Critique de Hobbes et fondement de la morale chez Cudworth', in *The*

There is also a comment that might be taken as a reference to Spinoza, although he is not named.²⁴ It is not clear how familiar Cudworth was with Spinoza's philosophy. While the *TIS* was published a year after Spinoza's 1677 *Opera Posthuma*, the bulk of it was completed as early as 1671, but according to Nadler parts of Spinoza's *Ethica* circulated in MS form as early as 1663 and a first draft was complete by 1665.²⁵ Here was arguably another contemporary atheist but one quite different from Hobbes. However, Cudworth does not name any of these contemporary opponents and instead embarks upon a philological excavation of ancient forms of atheism. Cudworth's view is that very few philosophical positions are completely new, and that every apparently novel philosophical idea usually has some ancestor. With this model of perennial philosophy in the background Cudworth takes on all and sundry contemporary forms of atheism via a complex taxonomy of the very earliest expressions of atheism. If Cudworth can show that contemporary atheists merely reinvent doctrines proven to be false long ago then his task is done.

Cudworth proceeds, then, to collate and categorize ancient forms of atheism and it is within this context that we find his discussion of Stoicism. This classification begins by identifying two principal forms of atheism. The most notorious of these is atomical atheism. However, Cudworth, the

Cambridge Platonists in Philosophical Context, edited by G. A. J. Rogers, J. M. Vienne, and Y.-C. Zarka (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1997), 39-52.

²⁴ For discussion see S. Hutton, 'Reason and Revelation in the Cambridge Platonists, and their Reception of Spinoza', in *Spinoza in der Frühzeit seiner Religiösen Wirkung*, edited by K. Gründer and W. Schmidt-Biggemann (Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider, 1984), 181-200, esp. 189-90. Whether or not Cudworth knew the contents of the *Ethics*, he certainly knew Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* as he quotes from it (*TIS* ch. 5 (1678) 707; (1820), vol. 3, 254). On Cudworth responding to Spinoza see J. Israel, *Enlightenment Contested* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 446. For a wider discussion of Spinoza and the Cambridge Platonists see Colie, *Light and Enlightenment*. For Henry More's response to Spinoza see A. Jacob, *Henry More's Refutation of Spinoza* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1991). Note also *TIS* Pref. ((1678) fol. **r.; (1820), vol. 1, 56), where Cudworth alludes to a contemporary exponent of hylozoism about to be made public but in disguise.

²⁵ See S. Nadler, *Spinoza: A Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 225.

atomical theist, is keen to show that atomism is not only compatible with theism but also that atomistic atheism is in fact merely a corruption of an earlier form of atomistic theism.

The second principal form of atheism he calls hylozoical. While atomick atheism conceives matter as essentially inert, hylozoism attributes life to all matter as an essential property:

One main difference betwixt these two forms of atheism is this, that the Atomical supposes all life whatsoever to be accidental, generable, and corruptible: but the Hylozoick admits of a certain natural or plastick life, essential and substantial, ingenerable and incorruptible.²⁶

While atomical atheism is naturally associated with the name of Democritus, hylozoick atheism is credited first to Strato, a Peripatetic philosopher and student of Theophrastus.²⁷

²⁶ *TIS* ch. 3 § 1 ((1678), 105; (1820), vol. 1, 234).

²⁷ The surviving evidence for Strato is collected together in F. Wehrli, *Die Schule des Aristoteles, Texte und Kommentar: 5. Straton von Lampsakos* (Basel & Stuttgart: Schwabe & Co, 1969). Strato has often been presented as pushing Aristotle's philosophy towards materialism, although the fragmentary nature of the surviving evidence makes it difficult to determine precisely how much Strato deviated from Aristotle's philosophy, if at all. On the topic of theology (i.e. potential fragments of his now lost *Περὶ Θεῶν*), Wehrli lists 8 fragments (fr. 32-9, on pp. 16-7). Cudworth cites 5 of these (and those that he omits add little more information; this is a sign of the quality of his scholarship): Cicero *Academica* II.121 (= fr. 32) 'all existing things of whatever sort have been produced by natural causes' (*docet omnia effecta esse natura*); *De Natura Deorum* I.35 (= fr. 33) 'nature [...] contains in itself the causes of birth, growth, and decay, but is entirely devoid of sensation and of form' (*natura [...] quae causas gignendi augendi minuendi habeat sed careat omni et sensu et figura*); Lactantius *De Ira Dei* X.1 (= fr. 34) 'nature has in itself the power of production and of diminution, but that it has neither sensibility nor figure, so that we may understand that all things were produced spontaneously, without any artificer or author' (*naturam vero [...] habere in se vim gignendi et minuendi, sed eam nec sensum habere ullum nec figuram, ut intelligamus omnia quasi sua sponte esse generata, nullo artifice nec auctore*); Plutarch *Adversus Colotem* 1115b (= fr. 35) 'the universe itself is not animate and nature is subsequent to chance' (τε τὸν κόσμον αὐτὸν οὐ ζῶον εἶναί φησι, τὸ δὲ κατὰ φύσιν ἔπεσθαι τῷ κατὰ τύχην); Seneca (fr. 31 Haase) *apud* Augustine *De Civitate Dei* VI.10 (= fr.

Cudworth's taxonomy of atheism does not end here, however. The distinction between Atomical and Hylozoick atheism is fundamentally a distinction between dead and living matter but Cudworth goes on to argue that each of these broad categories contains within itself more than one type of atheism. The categories of Atomical and Hylozoick atheism are thus each subdivided to give us four principal types of atheism. To complicate matters a little Cudworth carries over the labels Atomical and Hylozoick to two of these four subtypes. Now, alongside Atomical atheism stands another form of atheism built upon a conception of dead matter and alongside Hylozoic atheism stands another form involving the notion of living matter.

The first of these new types is Hylopathian or Anaximandrian atheism, after the Milesian Presocratic. Like Atomical or Democritical atheism this new type assumes matter to be dead. The difference between the two is that while Atomical atheism derives things or objects from the arrangement of atoms, Hylopathian atheism does so via qualities and forms.

The second new type, the fourth and final type of atheism, Cudworth calls variously Spermatick or Cosmo-Plastick atheism and like Hylozoick atheism is built upon a conception of living matter. The difference between these two is that while Hylozoick atheism attributes a life principle or force to each material entity, Spermatick or Cosmo-Plastick atheism posits just one living principle animating all of the corporeal world. This principle is,

37) 'suggested a god without a soul' (*fecit deum [...] sine animo*). On Strato's presence in early modern philosophy, and perceived connections with Stoicism and Spinozism, see Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, 444-57.

however, ‘without any sense or conscious understanding’.²⁸ Cudworth illustrates this with a passage from Seneca’s *Natural Questions* (to which we shall return later) and goes on to claim that ‘we cannot trace the footsteps of this doctrine any where so much as among the Stoicks’, and so he labels it Stoical atheism.²⁹

We shall come back to the details of Cudworth’s reading of the Stoics shortly. By way of summary first, we now have four types of atheism, divided into two pairs according to their respective conceptions of matter, and each type associated with the name of an ancient philosopher or an ancient school. The Atomical, Hylopathian, Hylozoick, and Cosmo-Plastick, are associated with Democritus, Anaximander, Strato, and the Stoics respectively.³⁰ What all these forms of atheism share in common is corporealism; they admit no other substance beyond body or matter. Cudworth writes:

all atheists are possessed with a certain kind of madness, that may be called pneumatophobia, that makes them have an irrational but desperate abhorrence from spirits or incorporeal substance, they being acted also, at the same time, with an hylomania, whereby they madly dote upon matter, and devoutly worship it, as the only numen.³¹

In fact, perhaps the key characteristic of atheism for Cudworth is that:

²⁸ *TIS* ch. 3 § 26 ((1678), 131; (1820), vol. 1, 285). The 1820 edition prints ‘of in place of ‘or’.

²⁹ *TIS* ch. 3 § 28 ((1678), 133; (1820), vol. 1, 288).

³⁰ See the summary at *TIS* ch. 3 § 30 ((1678), 134-5; (1820), vol. 1, 292).

³¹ *TIS* ch. 3 § 30 ((1678), 135; (1820), vol. 1, 293).

all animality, sense and consciousness, is a secondary, derivative and accidental thing, generable and corruptible, arising out of particular concretions of matter organized and dissolved together with them.³²

The essence of atheism, then, is the claim that consciousness is an emergent property. As he puts it elsewhere, all forms of atheism share the claim that all conscious life, all souls and minds, is generated out of matter or ‘duced out of nothing, and reduced into nothing’.³³ Theism, by contrast, places animalish, sentient, and conscious nature as the first principle of the universe, in the form of God.

The other characteristic that Cudworth attributes to all four types of atheism is a belief in the necessity of events (we already seen that determinism is Cudworth’s greatest concern), although he says that there are in fact two types of atheistic necessity. The Anaximandrians and Democritists posit a material necessity or absolute necessity, while the Stoics and Stratonists posit a plastic necessity or hypothetical necessity.³⁴ While the former can include fortune or chance, the latter is methodical and orderly.

Although Cudworth does not explicitly rank these different forms of atheism there is a sense in which he is far more upset by the Stoic and Stratonian forms. While Democritical and Anaximandrian atheists may appear to be more thoroughgoing insofar as they deny the existence of any

³² *TIS* ch. 3 § 30 ((1678), 136; (1820), vol. 1, 295).

³³ *TIS* ch. 3 § 32 ((1678), 138; (1820), vol. 1, 298). For a discussion of the notion of consciousness (esp. self-consciousness) in Cudworth see U. Thiel, ‘Cudworth and Seventeenth-Century Theories of Consciousness’, in *The Uses of Antiquity: The Scientific Revolution and the Classical Tradition*, edited by S. Gaukroger (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991), 79-99.

³⁴ See *TIS* ch. 3 § 33 ((1678) 138-9; (1820), vol. 1, 300).

principle of life within their dead matter, making both life and consciousness emergent properties, Cudworth *qua* Cartesian sees this mechanical view of nature the natural complement of theism, to the extent that this dead matter requires transcendent intervention to account for its motion. Stoic and Stratonian atheism, by contrast, have no need for a first cause for they have their own immanent principle of movement.

Cudworth is by no means concerned by the fact he has so many different forms of atheism with which to contend. On the contrary, he is delighted that ‘the kingdom of darkness [is] divided, or labouring with an intestine seditious war in its own bowels, and thereby destroying itself.’³⁵ The contradictory arguments put forward by each type of atheist may be redeployed against the other types so that they refute one another. Thus, ‘atheism is a certain strange kind of monster, with four heads, that are all of them perpetually biting, tearing, and devouring one another’.³⁶

Cudworth’s taxonomy of philosophical positions does not end here, however. He goes on to suggest that each of these forms of atheism has a theistic counterpart. Thus we have not only Atomical atheism but also Atomical theism (his own position), and so on for the other types of atheism. Indeed, Cudworth goes on to suggest that atomism has a natural association with what he calls incorporeism, a natural association violently broken by Democritus, the first Atomical atheist. Before Democritus, atomism existed in its authentic form as a type of theism.³⁷ The same

³⁵ *TIS* ch. 3 § 34 ((1678), 142; (1820), vol. 1, 307).

³⁶ *TIS* ch. 3 § 34 ((1678) 143; (1820), vol. 1, 309).

³⁷ See *TIS* ch. 3 § 2 ((1678) 105; (1820), vol. 1, 234). The evidence for pre-Democritic (and Leucippic) atomism comes from the Stoic Posidonius, cited by Strabo, who credits the doctrine to Mochus of Sidon. See Strabo XVI.2.24 (= Posidonius fr. 285, in L. Edelstein and I. G. Kidd, *Posidonius, The Fragments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972; second edition 1989), hereafter EK), with Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos* IX.363 (= Posidonius fr. 286 EK) and I. G. Kidd, *Posidonius II: The Commentary*, 2 vols

applies to each of the four types of atheism, which are also held to be corruptions of an earlier, authentic type of theism.³⁸ Atheism, for Cudworth, is always a degeneration or corruption.

Stoic Theism and Atheism

After this lengthy, but necessary, account of Cudworth's wider project we are now in a position to turn to his account of Stoicism. We have seen that Stoicism forms one of the four principal types of atheism and we should now expect Cudworth to argue that there is a corresponding form of theism – Stoical theism – and that this theism is the authentic and uncorrupted version of the doctrine. He doesn't dissappoint on either front.

For Cudworth, Stoicism is one of the archetypal forms of atheism and yet this is also a corruption of a purer and earlier Stoic doctrine. He suggests that the founder of Stoicism, Zeno of Citium (but also Heraclitus, often cited as a source for Stoic physics, and Hippasus of Metapontus, an obscure

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), vol. 2, 971-5. Cudworth notes this at *TIS* ch. 1 §§ 9-10 ((1678), 12; (1820), vol. 1, 90-91), where he mentions the attempts by some to identify this Mochus with Moses. On this see G. Aspelin, *Ralph Cudworth's Interpretation of Greek Philosophy: A Study in the History of English Philosophical Ideas* (Göteborg: Elanders Boktryckeri Aktiebolag, 1943), 19-22.

³⁸ Thus the counterpart to Anaximandrian atheism is Thales' theism and the counterpart to Strato's atheism is Aristotelian theism. See Aspelin, *Ralph Cudworth's Interpretation of Greek Philosophy*, 25-8. Cudworth's full taxonomy of forms of atheism and the corresponding theistic positions of which they are corruptions is thus:

Four Types of Atheism	Corresponding Theism
Atomical (Democritus)	Mochus
Atomical (i.e. dead matter)	
Hylopathian (Anaximander)	Thales
Atheism (i.e. corporealism)	
Hylozoick (Strato)	Aristotle
Hylozoick (i.e. living matter)	
Cosmoplastick (Stoic)	Stoic (esp. Zeno)

heterodox Pythagorean), thought the world to be an animal with a sentient and rational nature. As such he suggests that Zeno and the ‘most ancient Stoicks’ were not atheists at all, this being a later degeneracy from the original Stoic doctrine.³⁹ Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, was not an atheist; rather he was a ‘corporeal theist’, albeit an ‘ignorant, childish, and unskilful theist’.⁴⁰

Heraclitus and Zeno [...] are not accounted Atheists, because they supposed their fiery matter, to have not only life, but also a perfect understanding originally belonging to it, as also the whole world to be an animal.⁴¹

Even though Zeno asserts that only bodies exist and that the whole of Nature is nothing but matter, if it is also an animal with sentient or rational life then he should not be counted among the atheists. Instead, Cudworth calls his position one of corporeal cosmo-zoism, an example of corporeal theism, which is of course from Cudworth’s Christian perspective a type of spurious theism.⁴²

However, if Zeno had claimed that the whole of Nature was not conscious then he would have been an atheist, claiming that:

the whole world is no animal, but as it were, one huge plant or vegetable, a body endued with one plastick or spermatick

³⁹ See *TIS* ch. 3 § 28 ((1678), 133; (1820), vol. 1, 288-9).

⁴⁰ *TIS* ch. 3 § 30 ((1678) 136; (1820), vol. 1, 295).

⁴¹ *TIS* ch. 3 § 12 ((1678), 113; (1820), vol. 1, 250). For the Stoic debt to Heraclitus see A. A. Long, ‘Heraclitus and Stoicism’, *Philosophia* 5 (1975), 133-56 (and reprinted in his *Stoic Studies*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996 / Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 35-57).

⁴² See *TIS* ch. 3 § 26 ((1678), 131-2; (1820), vol. 1, 286).

nature, branching out the whole, orderly and methodically, but without any understanding or sense. And this must needs be accounted a form of atheism, because it does not derive the original of things in the universe from any clearly intellectual principle or conscious nature.⁴³

Zeno did not claim this, though, and nor did a number of his immediate successors, the most significant of whom was Chrysippus.⁴⁴ Diogenes Laertius informs us that:

The doctrine that the cosmos is an animal, rational, animate, and intelligent, is laid down by Chrysippus in the first book of his treatise *On Providence*, by Apollodorus in his *Physics*, and by Posidonius. It is an animal in the sense of an animate substance endowed with sensation; for animal is better than non-animal, and nothing is better than the cosmos, *ergo* the cosmos is an animal. And it is endowed with soul, as is clear from our several souls being each a fragment of it.⁴⁵

⁴³ *TIS* ch. 3 § 26 ((1678), 132; (1820), vol. 1, 286).

⁴⁴ The fragments for Zeno and the other early Stoics are gathered together in H. von Arnim, *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, 4 vols (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903-24), hereafter *SVF*. On Zeno's theism see e.g. Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos* IX.104 (= *SVF* 1.111), for the claim that the cosmos is an animal, and see also Arius Didymus fr. 29 (= *SVF* 2.528). A string of passages on Zeno from Sextus and Cicero are in *SVF* 1.111-14. For an overview of Stoic theology see K. Algra, 'Stoic Theology', in *The Cambridge Companion to The Stoics*, edited by B. Inwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 153-78. For more detailed studies see M. Dragona-Monachou, *The Stoic Arguments for the Existence and the Providence of the Gods* (Athens: National and Capodistrian University of Athens, 1976) and P. A. Meijer, *Stoic Theology: Proofs for the Existence of the Cosmic God and of the Traditional Gods* (Delft: Eburon, 2007).

⁴⁵ Diogenes Laertius VII.142-3 (= *SVF* 2.633, *SVF* 3.Apoll.10, Posidonius fr. 99a EK): Ὅτι δὲ καὶ ζῶν ὁ κόσμος καὶ λογικὸν καὶ ἔμψυχον καὶ νοερὸν καὶ Χρῦσιππος ἐν πρώτῳ φησὶν Περὶ προνοίας καὶ Ἀπολλόδωρος [φησὶν] ἐν τῇ Φυσικῇ καὶ Ποσειδώνιος ζῶν μὲν οὕτως ὄντα, οὐσίαν ἔμψυχον αἰσθητικὴν. τὸ γὰρ ζῶν τοῦ μὴ ζώου κρεῖττον· οὐδὲν δὲ τοῦ κόσμου κρεῖττον· ζῶν ἄρ' ὁ κόσμος. ἔμψυχον δέ, ὡς δῆλον ἐκ τῆς ἡμετέρας ψυχῆς ἐκείθεν οὐσης ἀποσπάσματος. For commentary see Kidd, *Posidonius II: The Commentary*,

On Cudworth's own terms, the most important of the early Stoics are clearly not atheists. Their cosmos is rational, ensouled, and intelligent (λογικὸν καὶ ἔμψυχον καὶ νοερόν). If their god is an animal, as it seems to be, then the Stoics are theists. Only if their god has merely vegetative life without consciousness – only if the Stoic god is a mindless vegetable – should Stoicism be classed as a type of atheism.

So why did Cudworth associate one of his four principal types of atheism with Stoicism? Cudworth draws on two ancient pieces of evidence. The first is a passage from Seneca's *Natural Questions* in which Seneca appears to waver between the competing claims that the world is either an animal or a vegetable:

Whether the world is an animal, or a body governed by nature, like trees and plants, there is incorporated in it from its beginning to its end everything it must do or undergo.⁴⁶

Cudworth acknowledges that Seneca appears unwilling or unconcerned to choose between the two options, but this makes him all the more suspicious. He pushes this suspicion further by noting that some earlier scholars have also doubted whether Zeno really ever held the cosmos to be an animal, although he doesn't name them.⁴⁷ It should also be noted that Cudworth amends the text of Seneca in this passage: *sive animal est mundus*, 'whether the world is an animal', is Cudworth's own emendation of the

vol. 1, 403-6. The syllogism reported by Diogenes Laertius can also be found in Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* II.21 (= *SVF* 1.111).

⁴⁶ Seneca, *Naturales Quaestiones* III.29.2: *Sive animal est mundus, sive corpus natura gubernabile, ut arbores, ut sata, ab initio eius usque ad exitum quicquid facere quicquid pati debeat, inclusum est.*

⁴⁷ See *TIS* ch. 3 § 28 ((1678), 133; (1820), vol. 1, 288).

text, which the manuscript tradition records as *sive anima est mundus*, ‘whether the world is a soul’. Although this might look as if Cudworth is amending the text to fit his own concerns, in fact the contrast he wants to make is clear in both readings, and a number of subsequent editors of the *Natural Questions* have adopted Cudworth’s reading.⁴⁸

Seneca’s indecision, suspicious as it may look, is hardly grounds on its own to cast the Stoics as one of the archetypal groups of ancient atheists. Cudworth’s second piece of evidence for Stoic atheism is more forthright. Earlier we saw Diogenes Laertius report that a whole series of important Stoics, including Chrysippus, Apollodorus, and Posidonius, all affirmed that the cosmos was indeed a rational, animate, and intelligent animal. The next line of Diogenes’ account adds that:

Boethus, however, denies that the cosmos is an animal.⁴⁹

Boethus of Sidon was a relatively minor Stoic of the second century BC with heterodox views on a number of points of Stoic physical theory: he rejected the doctrine of periodic conflagration, posited the eternity and incorruptibility of the world, and denied that the world was an animal.⁵⁰ Cudworth, however, calls him

⁴⁸ T. H. Corcoran notes in his Loeb Classical Library edition of the *Naturales Quaestiones*, 2 vols (London: Heinemann, 1971-2) that *animal* was read by Koeler in his 1819 edition and Oltramere in his 1929 Budé edition, in place of *anima* in the MSS. In fact, Koeler was simply following Cudworth. H. Hine’s more recent critical edition of the *Naturales Quaestiones* records that while Cudworth proposes *animal*, the consensus of the MSS is indeed *anima*. See H. Hine, *Seneca, Naturalium Quaestionum Libros* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1996), 159.

⁴⁹ Diogenes Laertius VII.143 (= *SVF* 3.Boeth.6): Βόηθος δέ φησιν οὐκ εἶναι ζῶον τὸν κόσμον.

⁵⁰ Boethus of Sidon (teacher of Strabo), for whom there are 11 fragments in vol. 3 of *SVF* (of which the most substantial is in Philo, *De Aeternitate Mundi* 76-84). For an overview and further references see *Dictionnaire des Philosophes Antiques: II Babélyca d’Argos à Dyscolius*, edited by R. Goulet (Paris: CNRS, 1994), 123-5.

an eminent and famous Stoical Doctor [who] did plainly deny the world to be an animal, that is, to have any sentient, conscious or intellectual nature presiding over it, and [who] consequently must needs make it to be but [...] a body governed by a plastick or vegetative nature, as trees, plants and herbs.⁵¹

Cudworth goes on to claim, with no real grounds at all, that other Stoics may well have made this claim before Boethus, and that ‘it is very probable’ that Boethus had many followers. It is certainly doubtful that any Stoics before Boethus made this claim, as Diogenes’ report explicitly singles him out as the sole exponent of this heterodox view. Moreover, Cicero’s account of Stoic theology in *De Natura Deorum*, written in 45 BC, makes no mention of Boethus and repeats the standard Stoic argument reported by Diogenes that if there is rational mind in humans then there must surely be rational mind in Nature.⁵² Among later Stoics, Epictetus certainly does not follow Boethus’ lead and if anything goes the other way, embracing a more personalistic conception of god rather than reducing him to a mindless vegetable.⁵³ In Cudworth’s defence, he does acknowledge that Boethus’ position, like all forms of atheism, is a corruption of a once theistic worldview and he labels this degenerate position ‘pseudo-Stoical’.⁵⁴

⁵¹ *TIS* ch. 3 § 28 ((1678) 133-4; (1820), vol. 1, 290).

⁵² See Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* II.18. At II.21-2 Cicero reports Zeno’s syllogisms in support of this claim.

⁵³ On Epictetus’ theology see K. Algra, ‘Epictetus and Stoic Theology’, in *The Philosophy of Epictetus*, edited by T. Scaltsas and A. S. Mason (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 32-55, who acknowledges this personalistic element in Epictetus’ work but argues that ultimately he remains orthodox in his theology. Either way, there is no shift towards Boethus’ atheism.

⁵⁴ *TIS* ch. 3 § 28 ((1678), 134; (1820), vol. 1, 290).

Cudworth's objection to this pseudo-Stoical atheism is that it reduces consciousness to an emergent property. The ancient sources don't mention 'consciousness' of course (and in fact Cudworth may have coined the English word in this very discussion), but they do mention sensation (αἴσθησις, distinguishing animals from plants and vegetables) and reason (λόγος, distinguishing humans from other animals). What Cudworth insists on is that:

the sensitive souls of brute animals, and the rational souls of men, could never possibly emerge out of one single, plastick and vegetative soul in the whole universe.⁵⁵

On this point he is in complete agreement with the early Stoics and in particular with a series of theological arguments made by Zeno and reported by Cicero:

Nothing that is inanimate and irrational can give birth to an animate and rational being; but the world gives birth to animate and rational beings; therefore the world is animate and rational.⁵⁶

So, despite branding Stoicism as one of the four principal types of atheism, Cudworth's own position is in fact quite close to the orthodox Stoic view in rejecting the idea that sensation, intelligence, or consciousness might be an emergent property. This is not, however, to suggest that Cudworth held

⁵⁵ *TIS* ch. 3 § 34 ((1678), 143; (1820), vol. 1, 309). The importance of this point for Cudworth is rightly emphasized by G. Giglioni, 'The Cosmoplastic System of the Universe: Ralph Cudworth on Stoic Naturalism', *Revue d'histoire des sciences* 61/2 (2008), 313-31.

⁵⁶ Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* II.22 (= *SVF* 1.113): *Nihil quod animi quodque rationis est expers, id generare ex se potest animantem conpotemque rationis; mundus autem generat animantis compositesque rationis; animas est igitur mundus compositesque rationis.*

any secret sympathy for Stoicism; it simply reflects his wider commitment to Platonism.

Epilogue

Cudworth's aim behind his complete taxonomy of forms of atheism was not merely antiquarian. As we have already seen, his principal goal was to undermine contemporary forms of atheism, with Hobbes and Spinoza being the most likely targets.⁵⁷ While Hobbes attracted a number of polemics,⁵⁸ and Hobbes and Spinoza were sometimes attacked together (by, among others, Samuel Clarke in his *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*), it was Spinoza's alleged atheism that would prove to have most consequences for the reception of Stoicism in the period after the publication of the *TIS*.

What is striking about the reception of both Stoicism and Spinozism from the 1670s onwards is the way in which they are intertwined.⁵⁹ The first author to pursue this line of thought was Jakob Thomasius, who published works on Stoicism in 1676 and 1682, and whose greatest claim to fame

⁵⁷ To these we might add Francis Glisson author of *The Life of Nature* (i.e. the *Tractatus de natura substantiae energetica, seu De vita Naturae*, published in London, 1672), mentioned by Cudworth at *TIS* ch. 5 ((1678), 839; (1820), vol. 4, 92).

⁵⁸ See e.g. Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan*.

⁵⁹ On this see e.g. Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, 457-70; Brooke, 'How the Stoics Became Atheists'. For discussions of the relationship between Stoicism and Spinoza see e.g. P. O. Kristeller, 'Stoic and Neoplatonic Sources of Spinoza's *Ethics*', *History of European Ideas* 5 (1984), 1-15; S. James, 'Spinoza the Stoic', in *The Rise of Modern Philosophy*, edited by T. Sorell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 289-316; A. Matheron, 'Le moment stoïcien de l'*Éthique* de Spinoza', in *Le stoïcisme au XVIIe et au XVIIIe siècle*, edited by P.-F. Moreau (Paris: Albin Michel, 1999), 302-16; A. A. Long, 'Stoicism in the Philosophical Tradition: Spinoza, Lipsius, Butler', in *The Cambridge Companion to The Stoics*, edited by B. Inwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 365-92; F. DeBrebander, 'Psychotherapy and Moral Perfection: Spinoza and the Stoics on the Prospect of Happiness', in *Stoicism: Traditions and Transformations*, edited by S. K. Strange and J. Zupko (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 198-213; F. DeBrebander, *Spinoza and the Stoics* (London: Continuum, 2007).

would be to have taught, and then corresponded with, Leibniz.⁶⁰ It was developed by Johann Franz Buddeus who, in a book on Spinozism before Spinoza, claimed that the Stoics were, among all the Greek philosophers, the closest to Spinozism.⁶¹ We see the same claim crop up in other authors of the period, such as Vico and Bayle. Vico, for instance, describes the Stoics as ‘the Spinozists of their day’.⁶² The same conjunction can be found later in the eighteenth century in the *Encyclopédie*: the article on Spinoza opens by contrasting Spinoza’s philosophy with Epicurus and Strato before identifying it with Stoicism. The only significant difference between Stoicism and Spinozism, the article’s author suggests, is Spinoza’s rejection of providence.⁶³

Despite this later tradition of identifying Stoicism with both Spinozism and atheism one thing is hopefully clear, namely that while Stoicism may not be easily assimilated to Christianity, it is not straightforwardly a form of atheism either. Cudworth is the only author of this period to offer a thorough analysis of these issues with clear definitions and conditions for what it means to be a theist or an atheist. Despite the reputation as atheists that the Stoics acquired in the eighteenth century, Cudworth shows well before that tradition even became established that it is mistaken, even if he may have contributed to its development himself. According to his definitions of theism and atheism the orthodox early Stoics remain theists,

⁶⁰ See J. Thomasius, *Exercitatio de Stoica Mundi Exustione* (Leipzig, 1676), 166-76, and *Dissertationes ad Stoicæ Philosophiæ* (Leipzig, 1682), 14-15, 22, 35. For an overview of these works see G. Santinello (ed.), *Models of the History of Philosophy I: From Its Origins in the Renaissance to the ‘Historia Philosophica’* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1993), 409-42. On his correspondence with Leibniz see C. Mercer, ‘Leibniz and His Master: The Correspondence with Jakob Thomasius’, in *Leibniz and His Correspondents*, edited by P. Lodge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 10-46.

⁶¹ See J. F. Buddeus, *De Spinozismo ante Spinozam*, §§ 18-19, in his *Analecta Historiæ Philosophicæ* (Halae Saxonum, 1724), 340-44.

⁶² See G. Vico, *The New Science*, translated by T. G. Bergin and M. H. Fisch (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 98.

⁶³ See *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire Raisonné des Sciences, des Arts et des Métiers*, vol. 15, 474.

even if their theism is far from orthodox Christianity, because their god is sentient. For the orthodox Stoa consciousness is not an emergent property for that would imply that a part might have greater perfection than the whole, and nothing, they claim, can be better than the cosmos.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ An earlier version of this paper was read at the *Oxford Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy* in October 2008. I should like to thank Paul Lodge for the opportunity to speak and the participants for their various comments. I should also like to thank two anonymous reviewers for the journal who made a number of suggestions and saved me from some errors. I remain all too responsible for not following their advice at certain points.