STOICISM AND THE VIRTUE OF TOLERATION

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Abstract: This article argues that the Stoics possessed a conception of toleration as a personal and social virtue. In contrast with previous scholarship, I argue that such a conception of toleration only emerges as a product of the novel conceptions of the virtue of endurance offered by Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. The first section provides a survey of the Stoic conception of endurance in order to demonstrate how the distinctive treatments of endurance in Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius merit classification of a conception of toleration; the second section offers a brief reconstruction of the arguments for toleration in the Meditations.

Introduction

In his history of the concept of toleration, Rainer Forst identifies its earliest articulation with the use of tolerantia in Stoic philosophy. Though the word tolerantia first occurs in Cicero, it is used to explicate Stoic doctrine. In the Paradoxa Stoicorum, Cicero identifies the tolerantia fortunae (the endurance of what befalls one) as a virtue characteristic of the sage, and connects it with a contempt for human affairs (rerum humanarum contemptione);2 in De Finibus, endurance (toleratio) is contrasted with Epicurus’ maxim that severe pain is brief while long-lasting pain is light as a truer method for dealing with pain.3 Seneca, in his Epistulae Morales, also identifies tolerantia as a virtue, defending it as such against those Stoics who maintain that a strong endurance (fortem tolerantiam) is undesirable, and linking it to bravery (fortitudo) under torture.4 Forst argues that these passages demonstrate that on the Stoic understanding ‘tolerance as a virtue does not refer primarily to the relation to others or to the relation between subject and authority, but to the relation to oneself as a precondition of dignified behavior’.5 As such, he contends, the Stoic conception of toleration emphasizes a crucial dimension that is often overlooked in the later discourse of the concept — namely, the ‘attitude toward oneself expressed in tolerance’ that serves as a precondition for the corollary attitude expressed towards others.6

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6 Ibid.

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My goal in this article is to contribute to our understanding of Stoic social and political thought by demonstrating that the Stoics do possess a conception of toleration; I argue, however, against Forst and others, that the use of *tolerantia* and its cognates by Cicero and Seneca does not represent such a conception; rather, it expresses a conception of endurance that, for Zeno and Chrysippus, is connected with the virtue of courage, and, for later Stoics, indicates a more generalized endurance of that which befalls one due to fortune or providence. The use of *tolerantia* and its cognates in Cicero and Seneca thus reflects the use of * uproμενω* and its cognates in earlier Stoic thought. The Stoic conception of toleration identified in this article emerges, I argue, when this notion of endurance is applied in distinct ways and to distinct contexts by Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. These unique elements are accompanied by a corresponding shift in vocabulary — in both thinkers, the word *άνεξα* and its cognates is used far more frequently than * uproμενω* and its cognates in discussing the virtue of endurance. Most importantly, however, *άνεξα* and its cognates are also used to specify the obligation to ‘put up with’ others who disagree with us — an obligation that derives from a recognition of our shared rationality with other human beings. It is in these specific uses of *άνεξα* and its cognates that we can find a conception of toleration in Stoic thought.

To be clear, my argument is not that the Stoics possess, strictly speaking, a political conception of toleration, if we understand by such a political conception one that seeks to establish limits upon the exercise of state power to mandate and enforce the beliefs of its citizens. In Epictetus, toleration is conceived of as a personal virtue — tolerating others who disagree with us reflects the recognition that the beliefs of others are neither ‘up to us’, nor do they matter for our own happiness. In Marcus Aurelius, toleration is also conceived of as a social virtue — tolerating others who disagree with us is an obligation that we have towards them as fellow rational creatures. In neither thinker, however, is toleration discussed as a political principle. At the same

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7 M. Nussbaum, ‘Toleration, Compassion, and Mercy’, in *Narrative, Self, and Social Practice*, ed. C. Mattingly and U.J. Jensen (Aarhus, 2009), pp. 37–54; and L. Tønder, *Tolerance: A Sensorial Orientation to Politics* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 84–6. Nussbaum argues that Seneca illustrates how toleration must be balanced with mercy, but the combination of toleration and mercy seems an odd one. Mercy, as Seneca defines it in *De Clementia*, entails doling out a lesser punishment than a criminal deserves; toleration, in contrast, would seem to involve the judgment that an act of perceived wrongdoing ought not to be punished at all precisely because it does not deserve punishment. Tender argues that Seneca’s use of *tolerantia* in the sense of ‘enduring pain’ indicates a conception of toleration; while I think this conception of endurance informs the conceptions of toleration we find in Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, they are not equivalent.

8 Andrew Fiala has also argued that Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius possess a conception of toleration, one which centres on their uses of *άνεξα* and its cognates. Fiala, however, does not indicate how their conceptions of toleration relate to and, crucially, differ from earlier conceptions of endurance in Stoic thought. See A. Fiala, ‘Stoic Tolerance’, *Res Publica*, 9 (2003), pp. 149–68.
time, these conceptions of toleration as a personal and social virtue do address key issues that are important to any political conception of toleration; namely, they address not only what practices and beliefs the state ought to tolerate, but why individual citizens ought to tolerate such practices, and how it is that such citizens might cultivate the beliefs and social practices connected with toleration as a political principle.

The structure of the article is as follows. The first section offers a selective survey of the uses of ἀνοιγμα, ἀνέχω, tolerantia,9 and their cognates in Stoic thought from Zeno to Marcus Aurelius. This survey demonstrates the three key differences in the uses of ἀνέχω by Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius that can account for a shift from an earlier Stoic conception of endurance to toleration as a personal and social virtue: (1) Epictetus uses ἀνέχω and its cognates in the context of discussing virtuous practices in our verbal engagements with others with whom we disagree — this marks an important distinction from the use of tolerantia in Seneca, who focuses on the endurance of physical pain and, more generally, that which befalls us due to fortune and/or providence; (2) Marcus Aurelius uses ἀνέχω to address the other-regarding dimensions of endurance, in addition to the self-regarding dimensions discussed by Seneca and Epictetus; and (3) Marcus locates endurance as a part of justice, in contrast with the early Stoics who subordinate endurance to courage. The section concludes by comparing the results of this survey to what I take to be a relatively non-controversial set of components common to all conceptions of toleration; doing so provides justification for the claims that the later Roman Stoics do have a conception of toleration, and that earlier Stoics do not. The second section attempts to reconstruct the arguments for toleration in the Meditations of Marcus Aurelius. While both Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius claim that we ought to practise toleration, they do not explicitly set out the foundations for such a practice; this section, then, will attempt to make explicit those arguments for toleration that are arguably implicit in both their thought and in Stoic philosophy more generally.

I

Endurance in Stoic Thought

Before examining the terminology used by the Stoics to indicate endurance and (as I will argue) toleration, it is necessary to reflect on what appears to be a puzzle concerning how this terminology evolves throughout the history of the Stoic school. As mentioned above, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius use the word ἀνέχω to designate both endurance and a conception of toleration. In a passage from Aulus Gellius (a contemporary of Marcus Aurelius), we find

9 In what follows (Sections I.A–I.C.2), I translate each of these terms with ‘endurance’ and its cognates; it is only after making the case in section I.D that the distinct use of ἀνέχω in Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius warrants translating the term as ‘toleration’ that I make the switch in translation.
evidence for the connection between tolerantia and ἀνέχω. The passage reads:

Praeterea idem ille Epictetus, quod ex eodem Favorino audivimus, solitus dicere est duo esse vitia multo omnium gravissima ac taeterrima, intolerantiam et incontinentiam, cum aut iniurias, quae sunt ferenda, non toleramus neque ferimus aut, a quibus remus voluptatibusque nos tenere debemus, non tenemus. ‘itaque’, inquit, ‘si quis haec duo verba cordi habeat et eaque sibi imperando atque observando curet, is erit pleraque inpeccabilis vitamque vivet tranquillissimam’. verba haec duo dicebat: ‘ἀνέχου’ et ‘ἀπέχου’.10

That same Epictetus . . . was accustomed to saying that there are two vices that are by far the most grave and vile of all, lack of endurance and lack of self-control, when either we do not endure or bear the wrongs we ought to bear, or we do not resist those things and pleasures that we ought to resist. And thus, he says, if someone should hold these two words in his mind and attend to them in ruling over himself and keeping watch over himself, he will, for the most part, live a life that is free from wrongdoing and free from disturbance. These two words, he used to say, are ἀνέχου and ἀπέχου.

This passage offers a potential starting point in attempting to locate the source of Cicero’s and Seneca’s uses of tolerantia in earlier Stoic thought. Based on this passage, we might expect that tolerantia is a Latin translation of ἀνέχω, and hence that Cicero and Seneca use tolerantia to translate the use of ἀνέχω by the earlier Stoics; the use of ἀνέχω by Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, then, might simply reflect this earlier Stoic usage.

Yet, if we look to the fragments of the early Stoics, the word ἀνέχω does not occur very often,11 nor does it appear to be used in any technical or philosophical sense. Zeno, for example, is described as ‘unwilling to endure’ (μὴ βουλόμενος ἀνέχεσθαι) a wealthy, but philosophically-ungifted, student.12 Zeno’s unwillingness to put up with an arrogant student does suggest a kind of intolerance; and in fact, we could comfortably translate μὴ βουλόμενος ἀνέχεσθαι as ‘not wanting to tolerate’. Yet, that in itself does not indicate that the usage of the term in this passage reflects a conception of toleration, much in the same way that a statement of the sort ‘I am willing/able to tolerate the heat’ does not do so. Such everyday uses of the word toleration are not

10 Epictetus, Dissertationes ab Arriano Digestae, ed. H. Schenkl (Leipzig, 1898), fr. 10 (= Aulus Gellius 17.19).
12 SVF I.20 (= Diogenes Laertius, 7.22): ‘Ροδίου δὲ πιος καλοῦ καὶ πλουσίου, άλλος δὲ μηδέν, προσκεμένου αὐτῷ, μὴ βουλόμενος ἀνέχεσθαι, πρῶτον μὲν ἐπὶ τὰ κεκομιμένα τῶν βαθῶν ἐκκαθίζειν αὐτῶν ἵνα μαλλύνῃ τὴν χελάνδια, ἔπειτα εἰς τὸν τῶν πτωχῶν τόπον, οὗτος συνανατρίβεσθαι τῶς ράσκειν αὐτῶν καὶ τέλος ἀπῆλθεν ὁ νεανίσκος.”
necessarily dependent on or derived from more technical or philosophical uses.

If we look to the use of *tolerantia* and its cognates in Cicero and Seneca, we can see that both authors are using the term in a technical sense: it is a virtue that is either connected with or subordinate to the virtue of courage. Thus Seneca writes: ‘Likewise, the remaining virtues are also, among themselves, equal: tranquility, simplicity, liberality, constancy, equanimity, and endurance. For one virtue exists within all of these, which is responsible for making the soul morally correct and constant.’ In addition to highlighting the close connection between *patientia* and *tolerantia* in Seneca’s writings, these passages indicate that when Seneca uses the word *tolerantia*, he does so while operating within the framework of a Stoic account of virtue, and, more specifically, earlier Stoic discussions of the virtue of courage. Thus, it is to the discussions of courage in the early Stoa that we must turn in order to identify the source of Seneca’s use of *tolerantia*.

**I.A. Zeno and Chrysippus**

Plutarch, in discussing the unity of the virtues, states that Zeno held that the four cardinal virtues — wisdom, temperance, justice and courage — were both inseparable and distinct from one another. According to Plutarch, ‘he [Zeno] said that courage was wisdom concerning that which must be endured . . . while justice was wisdom concerning what must be distributed’. It is evident, then, that Zeno identified a set of circumstances that called for endurance (indicated by the use of the verbal adjective), and that courage consisted in enduring such things under the guidance of wisdom. While enduring what ought to be endured is a necessary condition for an action to count as courageous, such endurance alone is not sufficient; the action must

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14 As far as I can tell, Seneca seems to use these terms interchangeably to indicate the ability to suffer pain. On this point, see G. Besier and K. Schreiner, ‘Toleranz’, in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, Vol. 6, ed. O. Brunner, W. Conze and R. Koselleck (Stuttgart, 1990), pp. 445–605, p. 446.

15 *SVF* 1.200 (= Plutarch, *De Stoicorum repugnantis* 1034c): . . . τὴν μὲν ἄνδρειαν φησὶ φρόνησιν εἶναι ἐν <ἀπομεμετέχεις> τὴν δὲ . . . φρόνησιν ἐν> ἐνεργεῖσθαι τὴν δὲ δικαιοσύνην φρόνησιν ἐν ἀπομεμετέχεις. Τὰ ἀπομεμετέχεις ought to be supplied in this passage is confirmed at *SVF* 1.201 (= Plutarch, *De Virtute moralis* 2, 441a): . . . τὴν φρόνησιν ἐν μὲν ἀπομεμετέχεις δικαιοσύνην, ἐν δὲ αἰρετέοις σοφοσύνην, ἐν δ’ ὑπομεμετέχεις ἄνδρειαν.

further be chosen based on the knowledge that what we are enduring is indeed something that ought to be endured.17

This connection between endurance and courage is further clarified in the epitomes of Stoic ethics found in Diogenes Laertius and Stobaeus. In the latter, we are told that Chrysippus, in *On Virtues*, also distinguished between four spheres of action: that which must be chosen (ἀρετή), that which must be endured (ὑπομονή), that which must be resisted (ἐμμετέχω), and that which must be distributed (ἀπονεμητέω). These four spheres correspond, respectively, to the four cardinal virtues: wisdom, courage, justice and temperance.18 While providing further evidence for the connection between endurance and courage among the early Stoics, this passage also clarifies the kind of endurance that is linked to courage. Above, I translated ἐμμετέχω as ‘that which must be resisted’. Yet, ἐμμετέχω and ὑπομονή are quite close in meaning; both are formed from the verb μένω (to remain), and both could be equally translated along the lines of ‘to remain steadfast’. They are, moreover, often used interchangeably in the texts under discussion.19 Here, however, the distinct virtues to which they are connected indicate their different shades of meaning. What one must remain steadfast in the face of in situations that call for courage is pain, be it physical or psychic pain; what one must remain steadfast in the face of in situations that call for moderation is pleasure. In this sense, the virtue of courage calls for enduring pain when it must be endured, while the virtue of moderation involves resisting the temptation of pleasure.20

Courage is also linked to endurance in the Stobaean epitome of Stoic ethics,21 and listed under courage are also a number of subordinate virtues: perseverance (καρπερία), confidence (θορυβολετήτα), magnanimity (μεγαλομυρία),

17 This understanding of courage as entailing a kind of steadfast endurance does not originate with Zeno and the Stoics. In fact, in Plato’s *Laches*, a soldier who is willing to remain (ὑπομένει) on the battlefield despite the fact that he knows his enemy is better and stronger is described as displaying courage (193a, in Plato, *Opera*, Vol. 3, ed. J. Bur- net (Oxford 1903)). Yet, as far as I can tell, such endurance only acquires definitional importance with the Stoics.

18 SVF III.295 (= Diogenes Laertius 7.125).

19 See the definitions of καρπερία in n. 23 below.

20 Cf. SVF III.274 (= Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos* 9, 153). There, Sextus states that ἐγκράτεια (a virtue listed in the Stobaean epitome as subordinate to moderation) is a virtue that makes us superior to that which seems difficult to abstain from (ἀντὶ τῆς ὑπεράντου ποιότητας τῶν δοκιμῶν εἶναι δυσποσχέτων). The example he offers, of someone who is able to enjoy the sight of a beautiful woman but is also able to keep his hands off her, makes it clear that pleasure is what is being resisted. The virtue of χαρίτεια (which is listed in the Stobaean epitome as one of the virtues subordinate to courage) involves knowledge of what ought to be endured (ὑπομονή) and makes us superior to that which seems hard to endure (δυσποσχέτων).

21 SVF III.264 (= Stobaeus, Eclogue II.60, 9W): courage concerns acts of endurance (τὴν δὲ ἀνδρείαν περὶ τῆς ὑπομονῆς).
stout-heartedness (στεσσοτητα), and love of toil (σπουδαιοτητα). 22 Of these subordinate virtues, καρτερια comes closest to indicating a generalized virtue of endurance akin to what we find in Cicero and Seneca, especially if we consider what is a common alternative definition of the term: knowledge of what ought to be endured and what ought not to be endured. 23 Plutarch also indicates that Chrysippus mentions καρτερια alongside prudence and courage, 24 indicating, perhaps, that it held a more prominent place in the ethical thought of the early Stoa than that of just one of five virtues subordinated to courage.

I.B. Panaetius and Posidonius

While the above passages suggest that the use of tolerantia in Cicero and Seneca is derived from the discussion of endurance in early Stoic thought, we might wonder whether their use of the term owes more to the thought of Panaetius and Posidonius than to earlier members of the Stoic school. Cicero, for example, allegedly modelled the first two books of his De Officiis after Panaetius’ peri toυ καθεκοντος, though the degree of Cicero’s fidelity to his Stoic model is a matter of scholarly debate; 25 and we do find at least one passage in Cicero’s text that uses tolero in a way that plausibly has its origin in Panaetius’ text: 26 In general, that virtue we seek from a superior and elevated soul, is brought about by spiritual, rather than bodily, strength. Nevertheless, the body ought to be exercised and trained so that it is able to obey good counsel and reason when attending to business and enduring toil. 27 Here, we see endurance as connected with magnanimity, a connection that is, in part, in line

22 Ibid.
23 Ibid., III.270: καρτερια δε επιστημη εμμενεταιν <και> ουκ εμμενεταιν και σωθερεων; III.274: επιστημη υπομενεταιον και ουχ υπομενεταιον; III.275: παρακεισται τι μεν ανδρεια η τε υπομονη ην καρτεριαν χιλιοσειν επιστημην εμμενεταιον και ουχ εμμενεταιον.
24 Ibid., III.24 (= Plutarch, De Stoicorum repugnantis 1040e); III.297 (= Plutarch, De Stoicorum repugnantis 1041a).
26 While Cicero does go on to use Cato as an exemplum, there is no firm reason for denying that the doctrines related in this passage are those of Panaetius. On this point, see A. Dyck, A Commentary on Cicero, De Officiis (Ann Arbor, 1996), pp. 211–12.
27 Cicero, De Officiis, ed. M. Winterbottom (Oxford, 1994), 1.79: ‘Ommo illud honestum, quod ex animo excelsa magnifico et quærímus, animi efficitur, non corporis viribus. Exercendum tamen corpus et ista afficiendum est, ut oboedire consilio ratione possit in exsequendis negotiis et in labore tolerando.’ This same phrase (labore tolerando) can also be found at II.45, but there Cicero uses it to praise his son’s military service under Pompey: it is thus clear that its use in this second passage did not have its origin in Panaetius’ text, even if its substantive meaning is the same.
with the list of the virtues subordinate to courage in the Stobaean epitome. There is, however, a key difference: while both endurance and magnanimity are listed as virtues subordinate to courage in Stobaeus, Panaetius elevates magnanimity from being subordinate to courage to being one of the four cardinal virtues.28 Thus, for Panaetius, it appears that the ability to endure toil is part of the broader indifference towards externals that is captured by the virtue of magnanimity. As we will see, this understanding of endurance as subordinate to magnanimity is important for Seneca’s use of tolerantia; it also serves to highlight Marcus Aurelius’ distinctive use of ἀνέχο.29 If we look beyond Cicero to the (admittedly very meagre) fragments of Panaetius, we do not find any discussions of endurance, or any uses of tolerantia, ὑπομένω, or their cognates.29 While the terms do appear in the fragments of Posidonius, their use is not philosophically relevant.30

I.C. The Roman Stoics

It is in the writings of the Roman Stoics — Seneca, Musonius Rufus, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius — that the concept of endurance is best attested and most fully elaborated. In Seneca and Musonius Rufus, the primary focus of such discussions is on enduring that which befalls us due to providence/fortune. As such, their writings provide good insight into the connection between the Stoic conception of endurance and Stoic thought more broadly. Though this sense of endurance is also widespread in Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, in these later thinkers a distinct sense of the concept can be identified, one that merits classification as a conception of toleration. Each pair of thinkers will be treated in turn.

I.C.1. Seneca and Musonius Rufus

Seneca’s writings help to clarify our understanding of the category of ‘that which must be endured’ that is central to the conception of endurance in the early Stoics. Throughout Seneca’s writings, tolerantia and its cognates are used to describe the endurance of hardship, and are often used in conjunction with patientia (endurance). It is discussed as one of the virtues we would generally find within the good man’s soul,31 and represented by the actions of a number of historical exempla. Seneca hails Cato’s endurance during

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29 Neither term occurs in the extant fragments of Panaetius collected by van Straaten. See M. van Straaten, _Panaetii Rhodii Fragmenta_ (Leiden, 1962).
31 Seneca, _Epistulae Morales_ 115.3: ‘Si nobis animum boni viri liceret inspicere, o quam pulchram faciem, quam sanctam, quam ex magnifico placidoque fulgentem videremus, hinc iustitia, illinc fortitudine, hinc temperantia prudentiaque lucentibus!’
his march through the desert in Africa; 32 Regulus’ endurance of torture is applauded; 33 Marcus Antonius, Seneca’s grandfather, is praised for enduring the death of his brother; 34 even Epicurus is commended for his statement that he was happy during his final days though he had to endure much physical torment. 35

In addition to confirming its place as an admirable quality within Stoic thought, Seneca’s use of tolerantia and its cognates also indicates its conceptual place within that system. In Letter 66, Seneca responds to the following puzzle: how can the Stoics maintain that all goods are equal if they also insist on distinguishing between three kinds (condicio) of goods (bona)? As he states in summary, there are: primary goods (prima bona), like joy (gaudium), peace and the welfare of one’s country; secondary (secundia) goods, like the endurance of physical pain (tormentorum patientia) and self-control during severe illness (in morbo gravi temperantia); and tertiary (tertia) goods, like a modest gait, a calm and honest countenance and a bearing that suits a man of wisdom. Yet we wish goods of the primary class unconditionally, while wish-

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32 Praeter has frugalitas et continentia et tolerantia et liberalitas comitasque et — quis credat? — in homine rarum humanitas bonum, splendorem illi suum adfundere.' Cf. 120.10.

33 Ibid., 104.33: ‘Vides posse homines laborem pati: per medias Africae solitudines pedes duxit exercitum. Vides posse tolerari sitim: in collibus arentibus sine ullis impedimentis vieti exercitus reliquias inopiam umoris loricatus tulit et, quotiens aquae fuerat occasio, novissimus bibit.’

34 Seneca, De Providentia 3.9–10 (in Seneca, Dialogi, ed. L.D. Reynolds (Oxford 1977)): ‘Veniamus ad Regulum: quid illi fortuna nocuit quod illum documentum fidei, documentum patientiae fecit? Figunt cutem claui et quocumque fatigatum corpus reclinavit, vulneri, incumbit; in perpetuam uigilia suspensa sunt lumina: quanto plus tormenti tanto plus erit gloriae. Vis scire quam non paeniteat hoc pretio aestimasse uirtutem? refige illum et mitte in senatum: eandem sententiam dicet. Felicior ergo tu Maecenatem putas, cui amoribus anxio et morosae uxoris cotidiana repudia deflenti somnis per symphoniarum cantum ex longinquo lene resonantium quaeritur? Mero se licet sopiat et aquarum fragoribus auocet et mille uoluptatibus mentem anxiam fallat, tam uigilabit in pluma quam ille in cruce; sed illi solacium est pro honesto dura tolerare et ad causam a patientia respicit, hunc uoluptatibus marcidum et felicitate nimia laborantem magis iis quae patitur uexat causa patienti.’

ing for goods of the secondary class only if necessary. The question, then, is how such goods can be considered equal if our attitude towards them differs — desire in the case of primary goods, and aversion in the case of secondary goods.

Having outlined the problem, Seneca offers the following solution, one that derives from the Stoic argument that only virtue is good (and only vice is bad). What distinguishes primary and secondary goods, then, has nothing to do with how fully they count as goods. Joy and tolerance, for example, are both virtues, and as such are equally good. As the division of the primary virtues in early Stoicism indicates, while virtue as a whole is a unity, its manifestations will differ in accordance with the circumstances surrounding its practice. To illustrate this point, Seneca provides the example of Scipio Aemilianus’ siege of Numantia. Though Scipio displayed courage in besieging Numantia, the utmost endurance (patientissime) of the besieged was no less virtuous. All the other virtues (as we saw above) — tranquillity, straightforwardness, generosity, constancy, equanimity, endurance (tolerantia) — are just as equal to each other, Seneca explains, since they all share in common the same underlying virtue.

To explicate Seneca’s argument further, we can look ahead to the opening of Epictetus’ *Encheiridion*, and the distinction he draws there between what is up to us and what is not up to us. What is not up to us, according to the Stoics, are the circumstances in which we find ourselves. For example, it is not up to us whether we end up, like Scipio, as the besieger or, like the Numantians, as the besieged. What is up to us is the judgments we make under such circumstances, and whether or not those judgments are virtuous and are in accordance with nature. Exactly how such virtuous judgment might manifest itself will differ according to the circumstances (e.g. joy v. endurance). Crucial here is that the actual circumstances are neither good nor bad: they are indifferent. Living a life free from debilitating physical pain, for example, is a preferred indifferent — something that though it is in accordance with nature nonetheless is neither good nor bad; in contrast, being subjected to torture is a dispreferred indifferent. The former should be desired while the latter should be avoided; the former calls for joy while the latter calls for endurance. Yet, insofar as we exhibit the virtue required in the given situation, the Stoics would say that we are equally happy.

The treatment of endurance in Musonius Rufus follows, for the most part, that which we see in his contemporary Seneca, though Musonius uses ὀνέχω and ὑπομένω in discussing what Seneca identifies as tolerantia and patientia. As part of his argument for the equal education of men and women, Musonius states that both should cultivate the endurance of toil, he further argues that

36 Ibid., 66.5–6.

37 Musonius Rufus, 4.78–80: καὶ μὴν τὸν παιδευόμενον ὀρθῶς, ὡστε ἢ ν ἢ, ἐίτε ἄρρητη ἐίτε θήλεια, ἑθοστέον μὲν ἀνέχεσθαι πόνον . . . References to Musonius Rufus
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education will make women more courageous, and as such, less likely to endure/submit to anything shameful. 38 Musonius also highlights the mistaken judgments individuals make concerning what they ought to endure: in his diatribe against men cutting their hair, he notes that such men endure appearing effeminate, which real men should avoid; 39 as with Seneca, he notes just how many kinds of hardships and toils individuals are willing to endure for ‘goods’ like wealth and honour while being unwilling to do so for the sake of virtue; 40 and he explains that it is our mistaken attachment to such externals that often make us unwilling to act virtuously. 41

I.C.2. Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius

Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius both continue to regard the endurance of that which befalls us as an important Stoic virtue. They also continue to use both φύγεω and υπομένω and their cognates in discussing endurance, though the former is far more prevalent in both authors. 42 In Epictetus, the display of endurance is often attested as evidence that one is making true philosophical progress. 43 As in Seneca and Musonius Rufus, he also emphasizes the contrast are taken from C. Lutz, ‘Musonius Rufus: The Roman Socrates’, Yale Classical Studies, 10 (1947), pp. 32–147.


39 Ibid., 21.30–4: ἢδὲ δὲ τίνες καὶ αὐτῷ τὸ βαρύνεσθαι τὰς τρίχας κείρονται, καὶ λεικονύσσα τὰ γένεια, σοφὸς οὗ τοῖς κατευγότης ὑπὸ τῆς τριφής καὶ εἰκενευρισκόμενοι παντότεσσαν, οἷς τα ἀνέχονται ἀνδρῶν οἷς καὶ γυναικοῦδες ὅρσεθαι ὑντες, ὅπερ ἐδεί φύεται εἰς ἀπαντες, εἰ δὲ τὸ ὁπλι ἀνδρῶν ἔστιν.

40 Ibid., 7.3–11: πῶς μὲν πονοῦσιν ἐννοι τι’ εἰπθυμίας κακῶς, ὅσπερ οἱ ἔρωτες ἀκολαστάς, πῶς δ’ ὑπομένουσιν ἄλλοι τοὺς κεραίνει χάριν, πῶς δ’ ὁ μῦκοποιήθητον ἔννοι θηρεύμενος δόξαν, καὶ ὅτι οὕτως πάντες υπομένουσιν αὐθαίρετον πάσαν ταλαιπωρίαν. ἀρ’ οὖν ὁ μῦκοποιήθητον ἐκείνως μὲν πάντως τό κάλον ἀνέχεσθη τοῦτο πάσχοντες, ἠμᾶς δ’ ὑπὲρ κολακογένεις καὶ τοῦ κακίας μὲν ἐκφυείη λαμβανομένην ἡμῶν τὸν βίον, κτήσθησαν δὲ ἀρετήν, ἢ τὶς ἀπάντων τὸν ἀγαθὸν ἐπὶ πορίῃς, μὴ πάντα πάνω ἐτοιμος ὑπαστοῦσθαι; Cf. 7.28–37, 18B.72.

41 Ibid., 20.58.

42 As is the case in Musonius Rufus as well. ἀνέχοα and its cognates are used roughly twice as often as υπομένω and its cognates in both Musonius Rufus and Marcus Aurelius. In Epictetus, that ratio is nearly 4:1.

43 Epictetus, Dissertations 3.13.22–3: ἀλλ’ εἰθέως ός σοφοί διαγένειν ἐθέλημεν καὶ ὕφελεν ανθρώποις, ποιην ὕφελεν; τι ποιεῖ; σκοτόν γὰρ ὕφελες; ἀλλ’ προσερχεται αὐτῶς θέλες; σο γὰρ προσέρχεσαι θέλες αὐτῶς ὕφελε; δεῖξον αὐτοῖς ἐπὶ σχετικοῦ, οἷος ποιηθεὶς φιλοσοφία, καὶ μὴ ὀλίγηρε, ἐσθοῦς τοὺς συνεθέλοντος ὕφελε, πίνον τοὺς πίνοντας, εἰκόν πόσι, ποιηθεὶς, ἀνεχόμενος, οὕτως αὐτῶς ὕφελε καὶ μὴ κατεξέρα αὐτῶν τὸ σαυτὸν ἀλήγμα. Cf. 3.21.5–7, 3.22.100 (as a Cynic virtue), 4.4.16–18, 4.8.20. As Epictetus repeatedly stresses, true
between what we willingly endure for the sake of worldly goods and our comparative unwillingness to endure hardship for the sake of virtue. In particular, Epictetus argues that this error is caused by our mistaken judgments concerning what has value and what does not.

Just as Seneca provides historical *exempla* of those who displayed the virtue of *tolerantia* (good Roman examples like Cato), so too does Epictetus. For Epictetus, it is Socrates who most of all exemplified the virtue of endurance. For Epictetus, it is Socrates who most of all exemplified the virtue of endurance. For Epictetus, it is Socrates who most of all exemplified the virtue of endurance. For Epictetus, it is Socrates who most of all exemplified the virtue of endurance. For Epictetus, it is Socrates who most of all exemplified the virtue of endurance.

Referencing Xenophon’s *Symposium*, Epictetus notes that Socrates never became irritated during an argument, nor did he ever use any abusive or hubristic language; rather, he endured being abused by others and helped put an end to conflicts.

This example of Socrates’ endurance is part of a broader discussion concerning how we ought to conduct ourselves during an argument, one that is connected with our ability to endure the criticisms of others. Both here and in other references to Socrates’ endurance we can begin to see a new aspect of the concept emerge, one that, instead of focusing on the endurance of that which befalls us, or the endurance of physical pain, emphasizes instead endurance as a virtue that is practised in our critical engagements with others. This development is best illustrated in the following passage from the *Discourses*:

> ὁ καλὸς καὶ ἁγιότατος οὕτω συνήκη τινι οὕτω ἄλλων εἰ κατὰ δύναμιν. παραδείγματι δὲ καὶ τοῦτον καθήσερ καὶ τὸν ἄλλων ἐκκείθητε ἠμῖν ὁ βίος

philosophical progress is shown, for example, not by simply reading the works of Chrysippus, but by successfully putting Stoic doctrine into practice.

44 Ibid., 1.6.26–9.
45 Ibid., 2.2.13.3, 2.17.19.1, 4.1.27.1.
47 Epictetus, *Dissertationes* 2.12.14: τὸ πρῶτον δὲ τούτῳ καὶ μάλιστα ἰδίον Σοκράτης μηδέποτε παροξυνθήμεν ἐν λόγῳ, μηδέποτε λοίδορον προενέγκασθαι μηδέν, μηδέποθ’ ὑβριστικον, ἀλλὰ τὸν λοίδοροντον ἀνέχεσθαι καὶ πατείνει μέχριν. Cf. 4.5.3–4. Epictetus probably has in mind *Symposium* 6.6–10, where the Syracusan who is providing the entertainment for the occasion, annoyed at the fact that the guests are so rapt in conversation with each other that they are paying no attention to the performance of his dancers, digs into Socrates by borrowing material from Aristophanes’ *Clouds*—referring to Socrates as the ‘Thinker’ (*φιλόσοφος*), and asking him to tell him the distance between the two of them in flea’s feet. Antisthenes turns to Philip the jester, and suggests that the latter retaliate in kind on Socrates’ behalf. Socrates, however, interrupts, telling Antisthenes that to do so would be to stoop to the same kind of abuse (ἀλλ’ ὄμοιον ἔχει ὁ Σωκράτης, σὺ αὐτὸν μὴ ἐκκαθεῖ, ἵνα μὴ καὶ σὺ λοίδορομένο ἐστίς).
The good man does not himself quarrel with someone, nor does he allow, as far as he is able, another to do so. We have a model of this, just as in other matters, in the life of Socrates, who not only fled from contention himself, but did not allow others to quarrel. See in the Symposium of Xenophon how many quarrels he resolved, how in turn he endured Thrasymachus, Polus and Callicles, and how he endured his wife and his son, even when the latter played the sophist in trying to refute him. For Socrates unfailingly recalled that no one is the master of another’s ruling principle. Therefore, he did not will anything other than what was his own . . . But if he wills that his son or wife does not err, he wills what is not his own to stop being what is not his own. And to be educated is to learn this [distinction between] what is one’s own and what is not.

Epictetus’ explanation as to why Socrates endured the above-named figures speaks to the philosophical and ethical significance Epictetus places upon endurance. Socrates’ understanding that no one is the master of another’s ruling principle (οὐδεὶς ἄλλοτριος ἰδειμονικοῦ κυριεύει) properly reflects the central division Epictetus emphasizes between what is our own and what is not our own, and hence, what is up to us and what is not up to us. Epictetus thus frames the inability to put up with others as a failure to make this critical judgment.

This point is made even more clearly by Epictetus when he returns to the example of Socrates at the end of the same chapter:

Epictetus, Dissertationes 4.5.1–7. Cf. 2.12.
451 Ibid., 4.5.33–5.
matter to me? For this is my work, and no tyrant can hinder me against my will nor any master, nor can the many hinder the one or the stronger the weaker. For this has been given unhindered to each of us by god.

This passage recalls the Stoic argument that our happiness is ‘up to us’. Given that moral virtue, for the Stoics, is sufficient for happiness, and that our ability to be morally virtuous or not lies entirely within our own power, our inability to endure others with whom we disagree reflects a failure to grasp these fundamental tenets of Stoic ethics. A lack of endurance, in this sense, reflects the misunderstanding that our own happiness is dependent upon the judgments of others, a misunderstanding that we can parse out along two distinct dimensions. First, it entails the judgment that the opinions and beliefs of others matter in terms of whether I am faring well or not. Second, it reflects the mistaken judgment that the beliefs and opinions of others are ‘up to us’, in the sense that we can exercise decisive control over the beliefs and opinions of others. In lacking such endurance, to borrow Montaigne’s felicitous language, we are mortgaging our happiness to the wills of others.  

Epictetus’ analysis of endurance thus focuses on its self-regarding dimensions; the inability to endure constitutes a harm to ourselves in the sense that it entails judgments that hinder our ability to flourish. Still, one might argue that there is also an other-regarding dimension of endurance implicit in the latter passage: if no tyrant can hinder our rational faculty, then it might imply that attempting to hinder the rational faculty of others is to treat them as a tyrant would treat a subject, or as a master would treat a slave. These dimensions of endurance are made explicit by Marcus Aurelius in the Meditations. In particular, while Zeno, Chrysippus and Seneca all discuss endurance in connection with the virtue of courage, Marcus argues that endurance is part of justice:


53 Epictetus also indicates that endurance has social and political implications when, continuing the passage quoted directly above, he notes that ‘these are the judgments that produce friendship within a household, harmony within the city, and peace among nations’ (ταί νῦν διερμήνεται ἐκ αἰχις ἀλλήλων παύει, ἐν πάσης φύλαν, ἐν βίον ομονοια, ἐν ἐθνον εἰρήνην). See Epictetus, Dissertationes 4.5.35.

54 Though the self-regarding aspects of toleration are still prevalent, if not dominant. See Marcus Aurelius Antonius, Ad Se Ipsum (hereafter Meditations), ed. J. Dalfen (Leipzig, 1987), 1.9, 1.16, 5.10, 5.15, 5.33, 6.12, 7.66, 10.3, 11.20.
For what are you annoyed with? With the evil of men? Recall the conclusion that rational animals have been made for the sake of each other, and that endurance is a part of justice, and that those who err do so involuntarily, and how many have already been laid out for burial and burned to ashes, having spent their lives en enmity, suspicion, hatred and contention — and then stop. But are you also displeased with what has been distributed (to you) from the whole? Recall the options — ‘either providence or atoms’, and from how many arguments it has been demonstrated that the cosmos is like a city.

Despite the novel association of endurance with justice, this passage might, at first glance, seem to recapitulate the Stoic insistence on enduring that which befalls us. Justice for the Stoics, as we saw in Zeno and Chrysippus, concerns what must be distributed (ἀπονεμημένα). On the cosmic level, all that has been distributed in the universe has been distributed by Zeus, and it has all been distributed in the best way possible. To be grieved at what has been distributed to us (whether that thing is physical illness or an annoying family member) rather than endure it can be interpreted, in this sense, as a failure to exercise the virtue of justice — i.e. to judge properly that all that has been distributed has been distributed in the best way possible. In this sense, we might understand Marcus as doing nothing more than emphasizing the (already implicit) connection between endurance and justice in early Stoic thought.

Yet, a further passage suggests that Marcus is doing more than that. He writes:

καθ’ ἐπεραν μὲν λόγον ἡμῖν ἐστιν οἰκεύόμενον ἀνθρώποις, καθ’ ὅσον εὕρεσιν αὐτῶις καὶ ἀνεκτεῖλεν καθ’ ὅσον δὲ ἐνισταναι τινες εἰς τὰ οἰκεῖαι ἑργα, ἐν τῷ τῶν ἀνθρώπων μοι γίνεται ὁ ἀνθρώπος ὁ σύν ἢς ἰσον ἢ ἦλιος ἢ ἄνεμος ἢ θηρίον.

In one respect human beings have the closest affinity to us, insofar as it is necessary to benefit them and endure them. But insofar as some stand in the way of my proper work, they are one of the things indifferent to me — no less than the sun, the wind, a wild animal.

For Epictetus, the exercise of endurance entails viewing the objects of our endurance as indifferent. Here, however, Marcus clearly distinguishes between viewing others as objects of indifference and treating them well and enduring them. Such treatment, Marcus indicates, is grounded in the affinity that we have with other human beings: most importantly, that we share with all other human beings the rational capacity that has been given to us by god.

55 Ibid., 4.3.2.
56 Ibid., 5.20.
57 E.g. ibid., 2.1.
Endurance, in this sense, is something that we owe to other human beings as part of what it means to treat them justly.  

Recognizing the fact that the judgments of others are not up to us — from the standpoint of our own happiness their ζητομενος, as Marcus states, is indifferent to us — does not mean that we should cease engaging with those with whom we disagree. As Marcus makes explicit throughout the Meditations, and as will be explored further in Section II, it does not mean that we ought to refrain from attempting to teach, persuade and instruct those whom we think have made errors of judgment. It does entail, however, that we do so with gentleness (προστητης), kindness (ευμενετης) and goodwill (ευνοετα), and that we persist in this disposition towards others even if we fail to persuade them. Living well involves acting neither like a tyrant nor slave, neither as one who seeks to dominate nor as one who is dominated; it involves living neither in dependence of others nor cut off from them.

I.D. Stoic Endurance and Toleration

Having surveyed the evolution of the Stoic conception of endurance, we must now assess to what extent it merits classification as a conception of toleration. As I have attempted to show in this section, the use of tolerantia in Cicero and Seneca reflects analyses within the early Stoa that identify ‘that which must be endured’ (υπομενετον) as the sphere within which the virtue of courage operates, and which classify endurance as a virtue subordinate to courage. In Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, however, we observed three key developments in the Stoic conception of endurance: (1) Epictetus emphasizes endurance as a virtuous practice in our verbal engagements with others with whom we disagree — this marks a distinct contrast with Seneca, who focuses on the endurance of physical pain in using tolerantia; (2) Marcus Aurelius addresses the other-regarding dimensions of endurance, in addition to the self-regarding dimensions found in the discussions of Epictetus and Seneca; (3) Marcus also locates endurance as a part of justice, in contrast with the early Stoics who subordinate endurance to courage. Given the state of our evidence for Stoic thought before Seneca, it is impossible to judge with any certainty whether Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius are drawing on aspects of earlier Stoic thought concerning endurance that are otherwise unattested, emphasize different...
aspects of that thought, and/or are engaged in conceptual innovation. Whatever the case may be, it is only the articulation of the concept of endurance in Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, I would argue, that counts as a conception of toleration.

In making this claim, and drawing this distinction between ‘early’ and ‘later’ Stoic conceptions of endurance, it is helpful to focus on two of the components that are shared by most, if not all, conceptions of toleration. As Forst and others have emphasized, toleration involves an acceptance component — the objects of toleration are individuals, beliefs and/or practices that, in at least some sense, we are willing to accept; for example, we might accept others with differing religious beliefs as our fellow citizens. It also involves an objection component — the objects of our toleration must also be those to which we object in some way; to stick with the same example, we might object to the religious beliefs of others, perhaps that they worship the wrong god(s), worship them in the wrong way, or the fact that they hold religious beliefs at all. Toleration requires both components — objecting to the religious beliefs of others while accepting them as fellow citizens is one (though not the only) way in which those components might be combined to form a particular practice of toleration. Without the objection component, toleration would collapse into acceptance or indifference. Without the acceptance component, toleration would devolve into domination or persecution. What these components entail, the grounds on which they are justified, and the manner in which they are combined will all vary across different conceptions of toleration; but the concept of toleration, and hence all conceptions of toleration, share these two components.

In Cicero and Seneca, we can identify both an acceptance component and an objection component in their respective uses of tolerantia. Yet, the sense in which we object to an object of tolerantia must be qualified. As we saw in Seneca, those circumstances that call for endurance are themselves ultimately indifferent. Though, before they occur, we would not wish for them and would try to avoid them (in this sense, they are dispreferred indifferents), once they do occur it is incumbent upon us, if we are good Stoics, to judge that what has happened has happened in accordance with divine providence (since

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66 On the distinction between concept and conception, which Forst borrows from Rawls, see Forst, *Toleration in Conflict*, p. 17.
all that befalls me happens in accordance with divine providence). As long as I exercise the virtues called for in the situation, I am just as happy as I would have been had what I had wished for come to pass (and, of course, I had also exercised the virtue proper to those circumstances). Thus, we can identify both an acceptance and a rejection component in Seneca’s discussion of *tolerantia*. The problem, however, is that such acceptance is not qualified enough; and that is because the two components of acceptance and objection are temporally separate. For example, if we object to future torture and try to avoid it, that objection ought to cease once such torture (or its general accompaniments) begins and be replaced by full acceptance. It is on these grounds, I would argue, that the conception of endurance in Seneca and the early Stoics does not qualify as a conception of toleration.

Endurance, understood along these lines, is also present in Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. Yet the various moves made by Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, identified at the beginning of this section, along with Marcus’ distinction between the two different senses in which we regard other human beings, open up the space for a Stoic conception of toleration to emerge. We can, and ought to, object to the judgments of others that we find objectionable; yet we must also accept that their judgments are not up to us, that they are equally endowed with a share of divine λόγος, and that, because of this, they are free to judge for themselves (in the sense that their judgments are ultimately up to them), whatever the outcome of that process; and that recognition requires that we treat other human beings with kindness and with toleration.

II

Toleration in the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius

As noted in the introduction, while Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius identify toleration as a virtue, they do not explicitly set out arguments justifying the practice of toleration. The goal of this section is to attempt to reconstruct those arguments, with particular attention to the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius. In doing so, it is useful to begin with an important passage from the *Meditations* where Marcus addresses the distinct obligations placed upon us in our social interactions by the fact that human beings are endowed with reason (λόγος):

τοῖς μὲν ἀλόγοις ζῴοις καὶ καθόλου πράγμασι καὶ ὑποκειμένοις ὡς λόγον ἔχουν, λόγον μὴ ἔχουσιν χρόνο, μεγαλοπρόνοις καὶ ἐλευθέροις, τοῖς δὲ ἀνθρώποις ὡς λόγον ἔχουσιν χρόνο καὶ κοινωνικός.68

Act towards irrational animals and, in general, towards deeds and that which exists as one who has reason towards that which does not — magnanimously

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67 See Epictetus, *Dissertationes* 1.9; Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 7.66.
and freely; but towards human beings, since they have reason, act also in a sociable manner.

This distinction between how we ought to treat other human beings and how we ought to treat everything else (be they irrational animals, inanimate objects or events) resonates with Marcus’ use of ὀνεκτέον at Meditations 5.20, discussed in Section I.C.2. above. There, Marcus argues that there are two ways of regarding our fellow human beings: (1) as having the closest affinity (οὐκετέον τῶν) with us, insofar as they are objects of our beneficence and toleration; and (2) as indifferent, insofar as they stand in the way of our own work. This division maps onto that drawn at Meditations 6.23 (quoted above). The judgment that one ought to act magnanimously and freely towards irrational animals, inanimate objects, etc., reflects an attitude of indifference towards them. This judgment can be an appropriate one towards rational animals as well; yet, we must also act in a sociable manner towards our fellow rational creatures. It is thus in the sphere of our sociable interactions with other human beings that the virtue of toleration is exercised for Marcus.

As Gretchen Reydams-Schils has argued, this emphasis on sociality, and in particular on the social dimension of ethics, is one of the distinctive aspects of Marcus Aurelius’ Stoicism, and it is within this particular aspect of his thought that we can best explicate his conception of toleration as an other-regarding virtue. For Marcus, treating others in a sociable manner requires engagement, rather than avoidance; and such engagement, as we saw above, ought to be conducted with gentleness, kindness and goodwill. The virtue of toleration is part of this conception of social ethics, and it is a characteristic that Marcus identifies in a number of exemplary individuals. He praises, for example, both his tutor Diognetus and his adoptive father Antoninus Pius for their ability to tolerate frank speech, and he lauds Sextus’ ability to tolerate private citizens and those who lack theoretical understanding.

As this last example indicates, Marcus often treats toleration as something we extend not simply to those who hold opinions that differ from our own, but to those who hold incorrect opinions. In this sense, toleration is figured as a vertical practice: student towards pupil, philosopher towards the uneducated.

70 Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 3.8.
71 Ibid., 1.6: καὶ τὸ ἀνέχεσθαι παραρθήσεις; 6.30: καὶ τὸ ἀνέχεσθαι ἀντιβαίνοντος παραρθησεωτικῶς τὰς γνώμας αὐτοῦ καὶ χαίρειν, ἐλ τις δεικτοῖς κρείττον.
72 Ibid., 1.9: καὶ τὸ ἀνεκτικὸν τῶν ἰδιωτῶν καὶ τῶν ἀθεωρήτους οἰομένον.
73 On this distinction between vertical and horizontal toleration, see Forst, Toleration in Conflict, p. 44. While Forst uses these terms to distinguish between forms of toleration practised by the state and those that operate on an intersubjective plane, such inter-
emperor towards subject. It is this last relationship, of course, with which Marcus was intimately familiar, and part of his concern in the Meditations is reflecting on how it is that one can live well as emperor.74 Marcus worries, for example, about becoming ‘Caesarified’ (ἀρχηγοποιηθῆς), and recalls the example of Antoninus Pius as a prophylactic in this context.75 Yet Marcus also writes the Meditations in order to keep at hand (πρόφυλακτα) those principles he believed were necessary for living well.76 In this sense, he writes as someone who is committed to Stoic principles,77 and by virtue of inhabiting that role, he ought to teach and instruct those who, on account of their mistaken judgments, are unable to live well.78 This attitude, along with the subjective forms of toleration might still be described as vertical, depending on how the parties involved view both themselves and each other.

74 According to Panaetius’ four-personae theory (which Cicero recounts at De Officiis I.107–17), there are four ‘role’ that shape both our identity and the ways in which particular virtues manifest themselves. They are: (1) the common nature all human beings share by virtue of sharing in reason; (2) individual differences in body type, temperament and disposition; (3) those imposed by chance or circumstance (which includes the possession of regna, imperia and nobilitas); and (4) those which we choose for ourselves. In the Meditations, Marcus is concerned, to various degrees, with all four personae; part of that involves considering what it means for an emperor of Rome to be virtuous. On the four-personae theory, see C. Gill, ‘Personhood and Personality: The Four-Personae Theory in Cicero, De Officiis I’, Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy, 6 (1988), pp. 169–99; and G. Reydams-Schils, The Roman Stoics: Self, Responsibility, and Affection (Chicago, 2005), pp. 1–13, 27, 93–4.

75 Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 6.30.


78 Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 8.59 might be taken to indicate that instruction and toleration are opposed approaches in dealing with those who are in error. There, Marcus writes: ‘human beings have been created for the sake of each other. Therefore, teach or endure’ (οἱ ἄνθρωποι γεγονόσιν ἄλλῳ ἔνεκεν· δίδασκε· ἡ ἑπέρε). The sense of
approach to such instruction that we ought to take, is illustrated in the following passage:

ποῦ ὀμόν ἔσπει τῇ ἐπιτρέπειν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ὑμῖν ἐπὶ τὰ φαινόμενα αὐτῶς οἰκεῖα καὶ συμβέβηκα: κατ' οἶκεία καὶ τρόπον τινά ἐν συγχωρεῖς αὐτῶς τοῦτο ποιεῖν, ὅταν ἀγαπακτιζῇ, ὅταν ἀμαρτάνουσι, φέρονται γὰρ πάντως ὡς ἐπὶ οἰκεῖα καὶ συμβέβηκαν αὐτῶς. ‘ἄλλ,’ ὡς ἔχει ὑμᾶς, ὡς καὶ διέκνυμε μὴ ἀγαπακτιζόν. 79

How cruel it is not to entrust human beings to have impulses towards what appears appropriate and advantageous to them. And yet, in some way you do not assent to them doing this when you become outwardly vexed that they have erred. For they are led entirely towards what is appropriate and advantageous in their eyes. ‘But they are mistaken.’ Then teach them and show them but do not be irritated.

In this passage, Marcus does not emphasize the fact that we cannot control the judgments of others, but that it is cruel to attempt to do so. There is a contrast here (albeit an implicit one) between an appropriate way of engaging with those who err (teaching and instruction) and an inappropriate way (the force and compulsion of the master or tyrant). Leaving these elements aside, however, it is important to emphasize that this mode of engagement is undertaken on the understanding that others are mistaken in their beliefs and actions.

This points towards the role that understanding (συγκείεις) plays in shaping our engagement with those who err. 80 As Marcus notes, those who err are led towards what they take to be appropriate and advantageous for them; yet that is not only true of individuals who err, but of all human beings for the Stoics. The language used in this passage — that of having an impulse for what we consider to be appropriate (οἰκεία) for us — reflects the process of οἰκείεια that is central to the epitomes of Stoic ethics we find in Cicero and Diogenes Laertius. These accounts explain how it is that human beings naturally come to inhabit the moral point of view. 81 From birth, the Stoics held that

79 Ibid., 6.27.
80 Ibid., 7.26: ‘When someone wrongs you, immediately consider what he thought to be either good or bad when wronging you. For seeing this you will pity him, and neither be amazed nor be angry. For either you yourself accept the same thing as good or something similar. Therefore, it is necessary to exercise understanding.’ (ὡς τὰς ἀμαρτίας τι κινεῖ σε, εὐθὺς ἐνθισμοῦ, τι ἁγαθὸν ἢ κακόν υπολαμβάνει ἡμεῖς: τούτο γὰρ ἣν ἢν ἐλεημοσὺν ὑμῖν καὶ ὡς ρύμωσίς εἰς ἄριστη ἐντατική, ἥτι τε καὶ συμβαίνει τούτῳ ἔκειν ἡμᾶς ἐπὶ ὑπολαμβάνεις ἢ ἄλλο ὀμολογεῖς ἢν ὑμῖν συγκείεις.) While συγκέιεις and its cognates have often been translated as indicating the concept of forgiveness, David Konstan has convincingly demonstrated that it means something closer to understanding. See D. Konstan, Before Forgiveness: The Origins of a Moral Idea (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 26–33.
we possess an awareness of what we are and what is our own; and we also possess certain natural impulses that lead us to seek that which helps us care for and preserve what we are. At a very basic level, we view things like healthy and nutritious food as ‘our own’, and are naturally drawn towards seeking such goods as those which enable us to care for and preserve ourselves.

This natural impulse for self-preservation is something that human beings share with other animals. For all animals, to live according to nature is to be organized according to these impulses that drive us to seek what is our own. In human beings, however, to whom reason (λόγος) has been given as a more perfect guide, to live in accordance with nature means to live correctly in accordance with reason; reason supervenes as a craftsman of impulse. With this in mind, Zeno designated the end (τέλος) for human beings as living in accordance with nature, and held it to be equivalent to living virtuously. This developmental story culminates, then, in the realization that what is truly our own is our rational nature; and this realization transforms the way we understand our natural impulse towards the maintenance of our constitution and self-preservation; properly construed, this entails preserving ourselves as rational creatures, and not just preserving our lives. In this way we come to see those things that we had judged to be goods as ultimately indifferent; they still have value, and ought to be selected, but their acquisition does not contribute to the maintenance and preservation of our constitution, understood as equivalent to our rational nature.

Though the Stoics believe that this development is natural, this does not entail the belief that all human beings will arrive at the judgments that what is most truly our own is our rational nature, and that what is appropriate for us is virtuous activity. With this in mind, we can distinguish between subjective and objective dimensions of the οἰκείωσις story: objectively, what counts as valuable is that which accords with nature; subjectively, what counts as valuable for me is what I take to be appropriate and advantageous for me. The

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82 Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 7.86.
83 Ibid., 7.87.
84 The recurrent Stoic example of resisting a tyrant at the cost of our lives illustrates this distinction well. One cannot acquiesce in the demands of a tyrant to act immorally while preserving one’s nature as a rational creature; it is preferable, in such situations, to prefer death to forfeiting that which is truly one’s own. For the use of this example to illustrate this point, see J. Sellars, Stoicism (Berkeley, 2006), pp. 108–9.
86 For this distinction, see T. Engberg-Pedersen, The Stoic Theory of Oikeiosis: Moral Development and Social Interaction in Early Stoic Philosophy (Aarhus, 1990),
Stoics thus acknowledge that there is a disconnect between what they judge to be an objectively true account of what is good and what merely has value and the way those terms are applied by others. Yet this distinction also points towards the Stoic argument that our actions are determined by our beliefs concerning what is appropriate or advantageous for us. Given that, for the Stoics, what motivates us to act are our judgments concerning what is appropriate — to phrase it as the Stoics would, what motivates us to act is our assent to the impression that our action is καθήκον — we always do what we judge to be appropriate for us.87 Attending to this subjective dimension of οἰκείωσις thus explains both why there is such a plurality of beliefs concerning what has value, and why it is that others act on such beliefs.88

This subjective dimension of οἰκείωσις thus explains why it is that, although human beings possess natural impulses to seek what is appropriate for them, and living in accordance with nature is what is truly appropriate for them, we inevitably find ourselves living in a world where there is a diverse set of judgments concerning what is appropriate. Elsewhere, Marcus explicates this phenomenon in terms of natural processes, likening the wish to inhabit a world without such differences as akin to desiring that the fig-tree not produce its bitter juice,89 or to becoming angry at someone who has bad breath.90 The analogies that Marcus draws in these passages emphasize that we ought not to expect others to act in disjunction with their dispositions and beliefs. Though we ought to recognize that those who err possess reason and,

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87 This is connected as well with the Stoic argument (which Marcus expresses both at Meditations 5.20 and 7.63) that those who err do so involuntarily.
88 As Marcus notes at Meditations 3.2, our ability to find in the by-products of natural processes (τὰ ἐπιγενόμενα τοῖς φύσει), such as the cracks in a loaf of bread or the foam dripping from a boar’s mouth, a certain charm and attractiveness (τι εὔχαρι καὶ ἐπιγενόμενο) is a familiarization (οἰκείωσις) with nature and its works. This passage indicates that while the process of οἰκείωσις is itself natural, its completion in every human being is not guaranteed.
89 Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 4.6. Cf. 12.16.
90 Ibid., 5.28. Cf. 6.57: ἰκτερίσι τὸ μέλι πικρόν φαίνεται καὶ λυσσοδήκτος τὸ υῦδορ φοβερόν καὶ παλίδεις τὸ σφετερίνος καλόν. τί οὖν ὀργίζομαι; ἢ δοκεῖ σοι ἑλάσσουν ἰσχύειν τὸ διενεργομένον ἢ τὸ χόλιον τὸ ἰκτερίσι καὶ ὁ ἰός τὸ λυσσοδήκτος.
hence, are capable, in this sense, of acting otherwise, we must also recognize
that they act in accordance with what they judge to be appropriate and, in that
sense, they are not capable of acting otherwise unless they no longer view
such actions as appropriate. Through instruction, then, they may come to see
something else as appropriate for them.91

Such instruction, however, must be practised with the understanding that it
may, and most likely will not, meet with success. Even if we are successful in
one particular encounter, that would not alter the fact that human nature is
such that we will always inhabit a world in which we are confronted by those
who err. This understanding lies behind Marcus’ injunction: ‘do not hope for
Plato’s Republic’ (μὴ τὴν Πλάτωνος πολιτείαν ἐλπίζε).92 As Pierre Hadot
has demonstrated, the phrase is not a reference to the goal of establishing the
social and political programme outlined in the Republic, but to the desire to
live among only philosophers, and hence, to live only among those who are
wise.93 Marcus’ rejection of this desire constitutes, in this sense, the recogni-
tion that while we ought to seek to teach and instruct those who err, we must
remember that their judgments are ultimately up to them, and we ought not to
expect success. Thus he adds: ‘For who can change the dogma of others? But
without a change of dogmas what else would there be but the slavery of those
who lament and feign obedience?’94 While instruction and persuasion are
unlikely to work, compulsion produces an undesirable outcome. The alterna-
tive, it would seem, is a practice of toleration whereby we learn to endure liv-
ing in the world with those who disagree with us; and intolerance, on this
view, reflects an inability to live among others with whom we disagree.

This sketch of the arguments for toleration in the Meditations is admittedly
brief, and it overlooks other aspects of Stoic philosophy, both in that work and
elsewhere, that might contribute to such a reconstruction.95 It also overlooks
the ways in which toleration is figured not only as a vertical practice by

91 Ibid., 5.28.
92 Ibid., 9.29.
94 Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 9.29: δόγμα γὰρ αὐτῶν τις μεταβάλει; χωρὶς δὲ
dογμάτων με ταξιλάθη τί ἄλλο ἡ δουλεία στενόντων καὶ κείθεσθαι προσποιομένων;
95 Two themes in particular are relevant. First, might we draw a connection between
intolerance, understood as the inability to live among others with whom we disagree, and
the ability to live within a world of constant flux and change, which is a recurring theme
in the Meditations. Second, as Julia Annas has argued, while the justifications of Stoic
ethical principles we find in Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius rely upon Stoic physics,
Cicero’s account of oikeiosis in De Finibus III does not do so. This might suggest the pos-
sibility of different paths to toleration within Stoic thought: one that relies upon argu-
ments for divine providence and one that does not. For this account, see Annas, The
Morality of Happiness, pp. 159–79, along with the critique of this approach by John
Cooper in J. Cooper, ‘Eudaimonism and the Appeal to Nature in the Morality of
Happiness: Comments on Julia Annas, The Morality of Happiness’, Philosophy and
Marcus, but also as a horizontal practice. For example, while Marcus notes that he ought to emulate the gods who always tolerate the uneducated, he must remember that he too is one of the uneducated. This recognition of his own fallibility shifts the operation of toleration from a vertical plane towards a horizontal one. How deep does this sense of fallibility run? Recognizing one’s own propensity to err along with that of others is consistent with maintaining the fundamental philosophical tenets that appear to ground the practice of toleration Marcus articulates. Could, however, such fallibility extend even to those principles themselves? Here, Marcus’ engagement with Epicureanism in the *Meditations*, in which, as scholars have long observed, Marcus appears to flirt with the possibility that the Epicurean account of the physical universe may be correct, might offer an avenue for exploring the possibility of alternative modes of justification for the conception of toleration he articulates.

Nonetheless, the above reconstruction does provide us with a sense of how the self-regarding and other-regarding aspects of toleration are joined together within the Stoicism of Marcus Aurelius. As noted above, these arguments suggest that intolerance reflects an inability to live among others with whom we disagree. It is, on the one hand, a failure to treat others as they ought to be treated as rational creatures. At the same time, this failure to tolerate others means that my own life will go less well than it could. Intolerance stems from the incorrect judgments that my own happiness depends upon the beliefs and judgments of others, and that it is within my power to correct the beliefs and judgments of others. In this sense, tolerance is not just about learning to live with others with whom we disagree, but learning to live well under such circumstances.

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97 The literature on Marcus’ engagement with Epicureanism is extensive, but it can be broken down into three main camps: those who argue that Marcus suspends judgment concerning the truth of Stoic physics and (1) this indicates the incoherence of his commitment to Stoicism, since Stoic ethics relies upon Stoic physics for its foundation; (2) this indicates that Marcus’ Stoicism is incomplete, though not incoherent, since a justification of Stoic ethical principles can be, and in antiquity was, made; and (3) Marcus does not suspend judgment concerning the truth of Stoic physics. For representative arguments of these types, see, respectively, Cooper, ‘Moral Theory and Moral Improvement’; Annas, ‘Marcus Aurelius’; and J.-B. Gourinat, ‘Was Marcus Aurelius a Philosopher?’, in *Selbstbetrachtungen und Selbstdarstellungen*, pp. 65–85.
Conclusion

In this article, I have argued that it is plausible to think of the Stoics as possessing a conception of toleration. Such a conception of toleration ought not to be identified with Seneca’s use of *tolerantia*, as others have contended, but with the distinctive discussions of the virtue of endurance found in Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. Epictetus shifts the analysis of endurance from the more general sphere of that which befalls us to our verbal disagreements with others; in doing so, he frames toleration as the recognition that the beliefs of others are neither up to us nor do they matter for our individual happiness. Marcus Aurelius further emphasizes the other-regarding dimensions of such a conception of toleration; for Marcus, toleration is a part of justice — it is an obligation that we have towards other human beings by virtue of our shared rationality. Tolerations is thus part of what it means to live well in the world with others.

As was mentioned in the introduction, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius develop a conception of toleration as a personal and social virtue, and not as a political principle. This distinction is reflected by the fact that this Stoic conception of toleration emerges during the same period in which Christians are persecuted within the Roman Empire, and those persecutions are continued by Marcus Aurelius in his political role as emperor. That Marcus may have believed that the persecution of Christians was justified need not dissuade us from considering Marcus’ interpretation of Stoic endurance as entailing a conception of toleration — most conceptions of toleration set limits to what and who can be tolerated. Nonetheless, it does highlight what is an important difference between Marcus’ conception of toleration, which focuses on generalized types of differences and disagreements, and modern and contemporary conceptions of toleration that are often motivated by, and directed specifically towards, problems concerning religious pluralism. It further underscores the fact that Marcus Aurelius does not translate his conception of toleration as a personal and social virtue into a political principle.

While this distinction is important, it should not lead us to overlook the deep connections between toleration understood as a personal virtue and toleration understood as a political principle. Just as the institutions of a liberal society demand the support of citizens who have internalized a set of liberal virtues, the existence of a tolerant society is dependent upon citizens who are willing and able to exercise the virtue of toleration. Given this emphasis on the virtue of toleration within contemporary scholarly treatments

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of toleration as a political principle, the Stoic conception of toleration as a virtue may help to focus our attention on two dimensions of toleration that are often overlooked.

First, the Stoic conception of toleration focuses on the self-regarding dimensions of toleration — it is a virtue that is necessary for my own individual flourishing. I hope to have demonstrated in this article, however, that the Stoic conception of toleration also entails an other-regarding dimension. This combination of self-regarding and other-regarding dimensions of toleration makes the Stoic conception somewhat unique. There are elements of the Stoic conception of toleration that appear to anticipate later developments: for example, the Stoic insistence that the beliefs of others are ultimately up to them might be viewed as anticipating Locke’s argument in A Letter Concerning Toleration that religious belief cannot be compelled; and the focus on our shared rationality might be viewed as anticipating certain Kantian and neo-Kantian approaches to toleration. Yet, the self-regarding dimension of toleration tends to be neglected within these approaches. In this respect, the Stoic conception of toleration emphasizes an important question surrounding the practice of toleration — namely, why should we be tolerant?

It also emphasizes a second important question — how is it that we come to be the kinds of individuals who are able to be tolerant? In this regard, it might be worth attending to the ways in which Seneca’s use of tolerantia in situations involving the endurance of physical pain (though not itself a conception of toleration) informs the articulations of the concept we find in Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. Epictetus emphasizes, in particular, the need to cultivate the ability to endure the criticisms of others, and frames such cultivation as a type of askēsis. These examples deal with mental, not physical, pain; yet they speak to the need to engage critically with others in order to learn how to endure the discomfort that often accompanies being confronted by disagreement and difference. In this sense, the Stoic conception of toleration might focus our attention on the moral psychology underlying toleration, and the conditions under which we choose to endure such pain.

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103 Ibid., 3.12.10.2.

104 For a recent attempt to grapple with this aspect of toleration, see Tønder, Toleration.