In his *Hymn to Zeus*, Cleanthes celebrates the supreme deity, whom the whole cosmos obeys (ll. 7-8), so great is the power of the thunderbolt he wields (9-11). The thunderbolt is the means by which Zeus makes straight the κοινός λόγος which penetrates and blends with everything (12-13). As a result, the world is a single coordinated whole (18-21). The moral implications of this order are not neglected (14-17, 22-31). As convention dictates, the hymn ends with a direct prayer for divine assistance (32-38):

> But Zeus, giver of all, you of the dark clouds, of the blazing thunderbolt,  
> save men from their baneful inexperience  
> and disperse it, Father, far from their souls; grant that they may achieve  
> the insight relying on which you guide everything with justice,  
> so that we may requite you with honour for the honour you give us,  
> praising your works continually, as is fitting  
> for one who is mortal; for there is no greater prize, neither for mortals  
> nor for gods, than to praise with justice the common law for ever.

Seneca, of course, knew Cleanthes’ work (he alludes to him in the *De Otio* and *De Tranquillitate*, cites him in *De Beneficiis* V and VI, and in eight of the *Epistulae Morales*). He even followed the example of Cicero who translated Greek philosophical poetry into Latin verse (*Ep*. 107.10-11), choosing another hymn by Cleanthes to underscore his own argument for the cheerful acceptance of fate.

> Father and master of the lofty heaven, lead  
> wherever you wish. I will not hesitate to obey;

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I want to thank Daryn Lehoux for his many helpful suggestions on an early version of this discussion. Margaret Graver was very generous with her help, both substantive and bibliographical, on the earlier and shorter version which I presented to the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy (*Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 15 (1999) 23-43). The participants at the Symposium in Lille provided once again both constructive criticism and encouragement. In particular, David Runia, Richard Sorabji, Emidio Spinelli, and Teun Tieleman were generous with written comments.
I am ready and eager. And if I am unwilling, I shall follow groaning, and be forced to do in my wickedness what I could have done as a good man. The fates lead the willing, drag the unwilling.

The themes of Cleanthes’ hymns lie at the heart of Stoicism and help to flesh out the doctrine of Chrysippus that theology is the culmination of physics. For Stoic physics is by no means the bloodless study of a merely physical (in our sense) world. Like every branch of philosophy, physics is intimately concerned with the place of human beings in the coordinated whole which is run by Zeus. This is familiar enough as a doctrine. But it will be helpful to allude to a summary by Arius Didymus preserved in Eusebius (SVF II 528). This account maintains that the cosmos is not just the σύστημα of heaven, earth, air, sea and the natural objects in them; it is also, and more significantly, a ‘dwelling place for gods and men’, a σύστημα of gods, men and the things which exist for their sake. As in a political order, there are leaders and followers: in the cosmos the gods lead and we humans are subordinate, although the κοινωνία is preserved through the fact that we and the gods have a share in λόγος, which is a law for (or by) nature. The theocentric nature of Stoic physics is further confirmed by the dramatic opening of this extract, which declares that, taken as a whole, together with its parts, the cosmos is properly called god.

Hence when we turn to Seneca’s main effort in the area of Stoic physics, the Natural Questions, we really should not be expecting him to be detached from lofty questions of god and man. And indeed he is not. For the Natural Questions is permeated by a vigorous interest in god, man, their relationship to each other, and the way in which the puzzling phenomena of the natural world relate to human life. As one begins grappling with a work which is often dry and impenetrable, it is worth recalling the first thing Cleanthes prayed for at the end of his hymn: ‘save men from their baneful inexperience/

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2 See De Stoicorum Repugnantiss 1035a, a direct quotation in which Chrysippus prefers the order: logic, ethics, physics and makes theology the culmination of physics. He shared this view with Cleanthes, if we may infer a judgement on importance from the order of the parts of philosophy listed at D.L. VII 41. But see also the views of Chrysippus on the order of teaching (D.L. VII 40): following Zeno he preferred the order logic, physics, ethics.

3 For what it is worth, Diogenes Laërtius’ brief summary of meteorological and astronomical topics at VII 151-5 is sandwiched between his account of διαίμονες who watch over human affairs and a treatment of the human soul.