
If there is a dark ages in the study of ancient philosophy, it is the period between 100 BCE and 200 CE when Epicureanism, Stoicism, Peripateticism, and other philosophical schools started losing ground to Platonism. Although we possess whole works by philosophers such as Epictetus, Philo, Plutarch, Apuleius, Galen, and Alcinous, most of our knowledge of the period comes from fragments. It is notoriously difficult to extract a clear understanding of the various philosophies and of individual variations within the same schools. Nonetheless, the period is crucially important for understanding the Neoplatonic period, whose authors would have known the works of the philosophers lost to us. Thus, this new two-volume anthology fulfills a commendable purpose in undertaking to describe and unfold these obscure centuries of philosophy to the modern reader.

The anthology is a readable and informative collection of articles by some of the best scholars of ancient philosophy. The two volumes cover a good deal of territory, subdivided by philosophical schools: eight chapters on Stoics and Cynics, four on Epicureans, thirteen on Platonists, Academics, and Pythagoreans, and ten on Peripatetics. There are also lists of major philosophers in each of these categories before each section and a better annotated list in an appendix to volume 2, an excellent 41-page bibliography, and a helpful set of indices. The two volumes open with an introduction by Sorabji, which provides a good overview of the anthology. In any wide-ranging discussion of philosophers and philosophies in a three-hundred year period, some philosophers will fall through the cracks. In his introduction, Sorabji explains that Alexander of Aphrodisias and Sextus Empiricus are left out because other discussions of them are readily available, Ptolemy because he has had little impact on later philosophy, and Galen because the doctor deserves a volume to himself. Although one is sympathetic to the reasons given, it is nonetheless sad that in such an all-inclusive group of essays, four more short chapters could not have been commissioned on these four important figures, especially Galen, whose influence is so crucial to understanding the conflicts among the schools in late antiquity. The chapters would have made this useful anthology more so.

It is impossible to do a complete review of all the individual papers contained in these two volumes. In my review, I will discuss the papers under the four philosophical headings in the anthology, saying more about some chapters than others.
Stoics and Cynics

The section opens with Stephen White’s chapter, which covers at various physical theories of Posidonius (including god, time, the size of the earth and sun, and divination, among others). Posidonius is seen as an independent scholar who is willing to alter Stoicism in order to defend it.

George Boys-Stones provides an interesting and (I think) compelling case for the pedagogical methodology of Cornutus’ *Introduction to the Traditions of Greek Theology*. Cornutus encourages young learners to observe the mythology not only for the truths it contains but also for its misconceptions, for it is by such errors that we may orient ourselves to faults in our own times and in ourselves. Although Boys-Stones does not raise the issue, one cannot help but wonder if Epicurus’ view of contemporary religious practices is not similar: one participates in it not only for the *ataraxia* it affords but also because learning from its mistakes makes us better Epicureans.

Miriam Griffin traces Seneca’s methodology in the *Epistulae* and *De Beneficiis*, in both of which the addressee progresses closer to *proficiens* status, leaving behind false (and often Epicurean) notions and coming to grasp Stoicism better. John Sellars follows up Boys-Stones’ and Griffin’s articles on pedagogy by arguing that Stoics divided philosophy into theoretical and practical varieties, with the former preceding the latter pedagogically. He tests this theory by looking at various “practical” texts, including Epictetus’ *Encheiridion* and Marcus Aurelius’ *Meditation*.

Richard Sorabji writes two insightful chapters on the later Stoics. In the first, he examines the Stoic view of self, locating it in their notion of *prohaeresis*, which Sorabji carefully distinguishes from Aristotle’s and from early Stoics’ as an activity of practical deliberation involving future actions. His discussions of the self and its relation to Stoic ideas of the periodic destruction and exact renewal, of memory, and of the inner self all deserve close reading. The second chapter concerns changing ideas about the emotions in the later Stoa, and here Sorabji rightly defends Galen as a source for Posidonius.

Epicureans

Diskin Clay presents a brief but enlightening chapter on Demetrius of Laconia (the teacher of Philodemus), who wrote on many Epicurean topics defending Epicurus from detractors. We read of Demetrius’ research into Euclid and *minimae partes*, attempts to clarify Epicurus’ doctrine of the gods as anthropomorphic entities, and miscellaneous philological topics. Voula Tsouna’s chapter on Philodemus on emotions opens with an overview of Philodemus’ work (including *parrhésia* and its role in Epicurean schools) and his version of the therapy of the soul.