Three Stoic Propositions in Diogenes Laertius VII 69-80

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The present paper aims at suggesting the emendation of the texts of three Stoic propositions appearing in Diogenes Laertius’ Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers at the places indicated by the abbreviations ‘DL VII 69’, ‘DL VII 78’, and ‘DL VII 80’.

The Stoic logic of propositions: negative, contradictory, supernegative, and affirmative, can be outlined as follows:

If ‘ϕ’ represents any well-formed proposition of Stoic logic so that ‘(ϕχ)’ also represents a well-formed proposition of Stoic logic, then:

the proposition ‘(ϕχ)(ϕ)’ – i.e. a proposition made of the functor ‘ϕχ’ and the argument ‘ϕ’ – is said to be the ἀπορροφικόν (negative) of ‘ϕ’ if, and only if, the negative functor ‘ϕχ’ is prefixed to its argument ‘ϕ’; an example of a negative proposition is “ϕχ ήμέρα ἐστίν”;

the proposition ‘ϕ’ and the proposition ‘(ϕχ)(ϕ)’ are said to be ἀνταφικήν (contradictory) if, and only if, the negative functor of the latter is prefixed to its argument ‘ϕ’;

the proposition ‘(ϕχ)(ϕχ)(ϕ)’, called ‘ὅπεραπροφικόν’ (‘supernegative’) or ‘ἀπορροφικόν ἀπορροφικόν’ (‘negative of the negative’), is, in its turn, contradictory to the negative proposition ‘(ϕχ)(ϕ)’; the supernegative proposition ‘(ϕχ)(ϕχ)(ϕ)’ and the proposition ‘ϕ’ are equivalent; an example of a supernegative proposition is “ϕχ ϕχ ήμέρα ἐστίν”;

1 The abbreviations are self-explanatory. To quote Sextus Empiricus’ books Against the Logicians II and Pyrrhonian Hypotyposes II, ‘SE AM VIII’ and ‘SE PH II’, both followed by Arabic numerals, are used. To abbreviate quotations from volume II of J. von Arnim’s Stoicorum Vetterum Fragmenta, ‘SVF II’ – followed by Arabic numerals and, sometimes, Latin letters – is used.


3 The main sources are: APULEIUS (SVF II 204 a), where it is stated that the Stoics call ‘abdicativum’ – i.e. ‘ἀπορροφικόν’ – only those propositions to which the negative particle is prefixed; DL VII 69, where negative propositions are considered a class of simple propositions; and SE AM VIII 89-90, where, in a more general way, the ἀποφάσις or negation ‘ϕχ’ – which can be prefixed to any proposition, simple or not simple – is dealt with.

4 The main sources are SE AM VIII 89-90 and DL VII 73.

5 These two terms are found at DL VII 69.

6 At least the supernegative posits (πίθηκο) the affirmative. See DL VII 69.
the proposition 'φ' — at least if it is simple and the negative particle 'οὐχ' is not its first element — is called 'καταφατικόν' ('affirmative'); for example, "ζήμερα ἑστίν".

1. DL VII 69.

In spite of this Stoic doctrine, the example of a supernegative proposition found at DL VII 69 is "οὐχ ἠμέρα ἑστί". Obviously, the text here is corrupt.

The text quoted, corrupt in the manuscripts, has not been properly corrected in the printed editions. In all the manuscripts — including the three most reliable — one of the negative particles was omitted, so that an example of a negative proposition is presented as an example of a supernegative proposition. In 1593, Casaubon, following Galesius, suggested the reading "οὐχ ἠμέρα οὐκ ἑστι", which is not in agreement with the Stoic doctrine of negative propositions. In 1693, Kühn recommended the reading "οὐκ οὐχ ἠμέρα ἑστι", which, on the contrary, is in agreement with this Stoic doctrine. Nevertheless, it is Galesius' version that has prevailed, and it is kept in the bilingual (Greek-English) edition of R. H. Hicks, 1925, and in the Greek edition of H. S. Long, 1964. Perhaps the editors have chosen Galesius' version for purely aesthetic reasons, aware of the possible cacophony resulting from the juxtaposition of the two negative particles, a consideration completely irrelevant to the establishment of the correct version of the text.

The definitive solution to the problem can be found in the Stoic sources themselves. According to Alexander of Aphrodisias, the

7 This term is not found in any of the main Greek sources of Stoic logic. See SVF II 176, 180, 210; also, APULEIUS (SVF II 204 a), where the equivalent Latin term 'dedicatium' is found.