

Gretchen Reydams-Schils, *The Roman Stoics: Self, Responsibility and Affection*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005. xii + 210 pp. ISBN 0-226-30837-5.

In the third book of the *Historiae* Tacitus presents us with the ludicrous picture of a Stoic philosopher mingling with the soldiers of the Flavian army as it prepares to invade the city, and preaching unheeded the blessings of peace and the dangers of war (3.81). The purveyor of this *intempestiva sapientia* was Musonius Rufus, an *eques Romanus*, a friend of many Roman senators, a political exile, and the hero of this book.

The author sets out to prove that the Roman Stoics adapted originally Greek Stoic doctrine to emphasize the importance of social responsibility and social engagement to the life of virtue. Stoicism, for all its emphasis on self-sufficiency, independence of outer circumstances, and spiritual self-improvement, saw the instinct for sociability as implanted by divine providence in human beings, who were imbedded in a society of rational beings comprising men and gods. What the author thinks was the distinctive contribution of the Roman Stoics was to retrieve for the life of virtue the traditional relationships of parenthood and marriage that Plato and the Cynics had tried to denigrate. It is therefore not the Musonius Rufus of Roman politics that interests her, but the advocate of marriage as a union of body and soul between equals and the opponent of infanticide and child exposure.

The structure of the book reflects this emphasis, for it 'reverses the Stoic progression from self to god and universe' (5). Whereas in Hierocles' explanation of the Stoic doctrine of *oikeiosis* (appropriateness) in terms of concentric circles, the self comes first as the closest object of concern, followed by members of the immediate family, then more remote relatives, members of the community and city, and finally the whole human race, here the author, having traced the Stoic basis of sociability, moves from the political dimension to parenthood and marriage, the last two topics receiving the fullest and most enthusiastic treatment. She thus changes the emphasis of most treatments of Stoic ethics: the concentration on family issues means that social relationships like friendship and slavery are only treated incidentally for comparative purposes. She prefers to engage with topics of particular contemporary interest, and, though she claims that 'the reader will not find contemporary philosophical counterpoints to the ancient views' (12), and disavows giving her own perspective 'uncritical priority', no one can fail to recognize the concerns of a 'woman academic at the beginning of the twenty-first century', questioning her assumptions (13), but reluctantly. Thus Musonius Rufus is defended (158-9) against a 'dangerously reductionist' interpretation of his views on marriage and shown to be truly ground-breaking in some of his proposals, such as insisting on chastity for husband as well as wife, even in his relations with slaves. Musonius' lack of interest in social upheaval in this area is compared to Seneca's concentration on the mere amelioration of slavery and finally deemed defensible because the marital relationship is not quite as irredeemable as the institution of slavery.

The main thesis is convincingly argued: that the Roman Stoic self, combining common human features with individual traits, is embedded both in the structure of nature as a whole and in a web of particular social relationships. Nor are the Stoics of this period simply conformist. True to the Stoa's original critical stance on society, they now try to transform traditional modes of engaging with others from within, championing heroic standards and remaining true to them by practicing detachment when necessary.

The author is well aware of the difficulties in exploring her chosen area. What is meant by 'Roman Stoics'? She decides to use this term, or occasionally 'later Stoics', not in a chronological sense, since the old division of Stoic history into phases is now discredited, but to cover a particular group of authors, writing in Greek and Latin, who 'had to come to terms with the socio-political challenges of imperial Rome': Seneca, Musonius Rufus, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius (2-3). Cicero is problematic because he is poised between Republic and Empire and because he is not a paid up adherent of the school, but the works written from a Stoic point of view are used.

We also find Hierocles and Antipater of Tyre invoked, though the former has no known engagement with the socio-political challenges of Rome and the latter is Republican in date. Yet it is presumably the date that excludes Panaetius and Posidonius, far more important figures.

Another problem concerns the sources for the views of the early Stoa on the issues discussed. Can one really deduce from the fragments that these Stoics were less concerned with ethics in action, given the casuistical implications of concepts like *καθήκοντα περιστατικά* (D.L. 7.109)? Thus it is suggested that the notion of reservation (*ὑπεξαίρεσις*, *exceptio*), for which most of our evidence comes from the imperial Stoics, could be particularly prominent in their works because they give so much weight to involvement in society (28; 108). Yet, not only is the idea that this notion is meant to solve, i.e. how a rational agent can act given his lack of control over outside events, confronted in a fragment of Chrysippus cited by Epictetus himself (2.6.9-10); not only does reservation figure in Stobaeus' rendition of Arius Didymus on the psychology of action, which owes so much to the old Stoics (*SVF* 3.564); but the idea is mentioned by Cicero in a letter (*Fam.* 9.16.5) written in 46 BCE to the philosophical Papirius Paetus, who is clearly meant to recognize it. This was before Cicero treated it in *De Officiis* 1.32, to which Seneca *De Beneficiis* 4.35.2 is clearly indebted. Then again, we are told that the Roman Stoics, in finding room for moderate grief, are breaking new ground (140). Yet the therapeutic literature on grief had a long history and contained multiple approaches. Thus we know that Chrysippus advised against applying a remedy to the mind while its emotional swelling was still fresh (*SVF* 3.474), and Cicero notes that he violated this advice in his self-consolation (*TD* 4.63). Pliny, writing about a Stoic friend, a pupil of Musonius Rufus, who has lost his young daughter, can represent the more radical reproving approach as the typical philosophical one in order to parade his own humane attitude (*Ep.* 5.16.8-11). The Stoa had always used different types of discourse depending on the situation, and the author's own brilliant treatment of the contrast between Cicero's discussion of his own grief in his letters and in the *Tusculan Disputations* (119-121) makes the point. Furthermore, Seneca shows at *De Beneficiis* 7.22 that the more severe proreptic vein which exhorts to a higher level than required, was not meant to be taken literally. One cannot deduce from Marcus' repellent reduction of sex to ejection of mucus that he believed he had fathered all those children without experiencing erotic pleasure.

The literary sophistication of the later Stoic literary texts is appreciated by the author (9), and she rightly insists (11) that their failure to set out the Stoic doctrines as a system does not mean that they do not know all the central doctrines, knowledge which they also take for granted in their readers. Unfortunately, she is not so alert to the fact that Seneca cannot be read as straightforward autobiography (85) and that Cicero's listing of social relations must be seen in context: thus at *Off.* 1.53-4 Cicero does not start from the self, as Hierocles does (97), because he is considering the correct order of personal obligation in conferring benefits: for the same reason he does not here include the gods, but they turn up in 1.160 in the priority list of general duties.

Finally, these Roman Stoics are imbedded in a known social context, well documented in the historical sources. Cassius Dio's malicious account of Seneca's role in his wife Paulina's attempted suicide (62.25) has to be assessed alongside other hostile passages, notably 61.10 where he appropriates the charges of hypocrisy attributed by Tacitus to Seneca's enemy Suillius Rufus (*Ann.* 13.42). 'What is honourable about Paulina's decision?' (171). It is not difficult to answer in Stoic terms. Suicide is a rational decision when the balance of the indifferents is deemed by the agent to be negative (Cic. *Fin.* 3.61). Seneca's widow might not have expected much kindness or freedom to honour her husband's memory from Nero, and she may not have thought life (an indifferent) worth living without the activity of caring for someone whose enterprises she had consistently supported. She had after all, unlike Thrasea Paetus' wife, no children. Seneca was not given a choice, but had she been the one under order of death, he would have had to make similar calculations.

What is particularly valuable about the book is the very attempt to map less well-explored areas of Stoic concern and the clear way in which practical ethics is related at every point to the basic physical and ethical doctrines of the Stoa. The author has digested well the Senecan arguments for understanding Stoic precepts in the light of the basic doctrines. She deserves to inspire further discussion in this vein.

Miriam Griffin

Somerville College, Oxford

Elizabeth A. Meyer, *Legitimacy and Law in the Roman World: Tabulae in Roman Belief and Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. xvi + 353 pp. ISBN 0-521-49701-9.

Scholars have traditionally focused on the *what* and the *why* of Roman law, but the last decade has witnessed an increasing interest in *how* the law was made and applied, e.g. O.F. Robinson, *The Sources of Roman Law* (1997) and Jill Harries, *Law and Empire in Late Antiquity* (1999). The present volume places itself in this tradition of focusing on the everyday workings of the legal institutions. Indeed, it takes us one step further by studying the tangible tools of Roman law themselves: the *tabulae* or sets of tablets used by Romans for recording contracts, wills and grants as well as for many other, more mundane, purposes. With *tabulae* as her point of departure, the author provides us with a refreshingly new perspective on the Roman legal system and attempts to bridge 'the chasm between the study of Roman history and the study of Roman law' (Introduction, 3).

The main section of the book falls in two distinct parts. The first, 'The world of belief' (9-120) opens with a very brief survey of 'Greek' (i.e., Athenian and Hellenistic) legal documents, how they were used and how they were perceived. The absence of a formulaic language for legal documents and the need for external proof of their veracity (e.g., by registration with a notary) are among many indications that Greek legal documents did not possess a special status or credibility *per se*.

Romans, on the other hand, assumed that legal documents were of a fundamentally different nature from other types of text (ch. 2) and recorded legal texts in archaizing, repetitive and formulaic language setting them apart from everyday Latin (ch. 3), a distinction that was even apparent when reading such texts aloud (ch. 4). According to Meyer what set them apart was not, however, content or language but the medium on which they were recorded: *tabulae* (ch. 5, 'Tablets and efficacy').

The second part of the book (121-293) is devoted to the artefacts themselves and their practical functions. The best evidence for the chronology and development of wooden *tabulae* comes from Pompeii and Herculaneum, and in chapter 6 Meyer traces the typological evolution of Campanian *tabulae* from two tablets joined to form a diptych and bound with a sealed string (ca. 15 CE) through several stages to the triptych form of the mid-first century. By a decree of the senate passed in 61 or 62 CE, tablets were henceforth to be pierced (*pertusae*): the string not only passed around the triptych, but through the document itself. Like earlier changes to the physical format of *tabulae*, this latest innovation was obviously intended to enhance their credibility and prevent forgery.

Chapter 7 traces the parallel development of *tabulae* in the Roman provinces and describes their eastern counterpart, the papyrus double-document used extensively in Egypt and occasionally in other provinces of the Levant. Chapters on the use of tables in the courtroom (ch. 8) and in Imperial lawmaking and administration follow (ch. 9). The Conclusion (294-8) discusses the place of *tabulae* in the evolution of Roman legal theory. The Roman legal document was, and remained, the recorded *proof* of a transaction, but Meyer argues that in practice, *tabulae*