



Lampe, K. W. (2016). Kristeva, Stoicism, and the "True Life of Interpretations". *SubStance*, 45(1), 22-43. <https://doi.org/10.3368/ss.45.1.22>

Peer reviewed version

Link to published version (if available):
[10.3368/ss.45.1.22](https://doi.org/10.3368/ss.45.1.22)

[Link to publication record in Explore Bristol Research](#)
PDF-document

This is not the final version of record. This can viewed (C) The Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System at <http://sub.uwpress.org/content/45/1/22.refs>

University of Bristol - Explore Bristol Research

General rights

This document is made available in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite only the published version using the reference above. Full terms of use are available:
<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/pure/about/ebr-terms>

Kristeva, Stoicism, and the “True Life of Interpretations”

The repertory of theories, practices, and stories associated with Greek and Roman Stoicism fills a significant compartment in the western philosophical archive, the meaning and value of which are ceaselessly reconfigured by each generation’s archivists. In the recent decades it is not only specialists who have browsed, rearranged, and relabeled these shelves; following Foucault’s *Hermeneutics of the Subject* as well as a powerful synergy between Anglophone scholars and cognitive-behavioral therapists, there is now a wave of enthusiasm, inquiry, and experimentation.¹ Into these vigorous currents I propose that we release yet another stream, namely the numerous commentaries on Stoicism in the psychoanalytic, literary, and broadly cultural criticism of Julia Kristeva.

My first objective in this article is to explain the scattered, elliptical, but insightful and coherent remarks Kristeva threads throughout her oeuvre.² These remarks are difficult to understand, both because they require familiarity with the audacious scholarship of Émile Bréhier and Victor Goldschmidt, and because Kristeva eschews dispassionate clarity in favor of affective involvement with the topics and situations on which she writes.³ In other words, she *performs* her ethics of interpretation. “Interpretation” for Kristeva designates an ethico-epistemic attitude, and the “true life of interpretations” designates a personally and politically healthy form of this attitude. Working through these scholarly and methodological challenges is a good way to appreciate how the theme of “interpretation” can tie together her reflections on language, ethics, politics, theology, and metaphysics, all of which emerge in response to the Stoics’ renowned systematicity.

My second objective is to sketch a critical response to Kristeva's presentation. The point is certainly not to praise or condemn her accuracy, but rather to develop a new perspective on the "existential option" that the Stoic life is, or—following Kristeva's intervention—*could be today*.⁴ This perspective is an important complement to those on offer from Foucault and the mainstream Anglophone tradition.

1. Kristeva on the Stoic "Life of Interpretations"

In "Psychoanalysis and the Polis," Kristeva writes,

I would say that interpretation as an epistemological and ethical attitude began with the Stoics. . . . Man, says Epictetus, is "born to contemplate God and his works, and not only to contemplate them but also to interpret them" "To interpret" in this context, and I think always, means "to make a connection." Thus the birth of interpretation is considered the birth of semiology, since the semiological sciences relate a sign (an event-sign) to a signified in order to act accordingly, consistently, consequently. (79)

This quotation makes clear the importance Kristeva attributes to Stoicism as the originary and preeminent example of a certain interpretive model. I will not address her assertion about the Stoics' chronological priority. What interests me is instead her claim that the Stoics' "epistemological and ethical attitude," which is revealed in their interpretive activity, can be encapsulated by the term "semiology," i.e. "making a connection" among three elements: an "event-sign," a "signified," and an action. What does that mean?

Before attempting to clarify this, it is best to complete the list of elements connected, according to Kristeva, in Stoic semiology. In "From One Identity to Another" she argues that "every language theory is predicated upon a conception of the subject that it explicitly posits, implies, or tries to deny" (*Desire* 124). There she mentions Stoic language theory only in passing, saying that she will not "refer back to the stoic sage, who guaranteed both the

sign's triad and the inductive conditional clause" (125). In this compressed reference the phrase "inductive conditional clause" refers to the connections we have just seen among event-sign, signified, and action. We might think of this as the secondary level in Stoic semiology. I will explain it more thoroughly in a moment. But the term "sign's triad" introduces a prior semiotic level, which is internal to the event-sign: namely, the connections among a signifying phrase, a conceptual signification, and an external state of affairs. We might call this the primary level of Stoic semiology. Kristeva believes that Stoic semiology is an "epistemological and ethical attitude" of the accomplished philosopher who, as she says here, "guarantees" both the primary and the secondary levels of connectivity.

In order to understand this connectivity we need to detour via Kristeva's beliefs about language.⁵ For Kristeva, language ought to be the last in a series of mechanisms for mediating and managing the intensity of our needs, joys, and frustrations vis-à-vis other people. She expresses this by saying that the engine of language is "primal want" (*Powers* 5, 35) or the archaic, sexual, maternal "Thing" (*Black Sun* 12-20; *New Maladies* 62; *This Incredible Need* 28).⁶ To put it another way, the Thing represents our unnameable and overwhelming fascination, love, frustration and hatred toward other people, which is fundamental to the human experience. Our first, infantile way of relating to the Thing is via kinetic and sensorial rhythms and patterns, which Kristeva calls "the semiotic." These are experienced as an immediate relation to the maternal body as possessor of the Thing. But in the normative sequence of development, the child "abjects" this relation to the maternal body and invests its loves and hatreds in paternal signifiers instead

– the “big Other” in place of the “(m)other.” Kristeva calls this the “thetic break”; like Lacan, she designates the ensuing domain of signification “the symbolic.” But Kristeva places greater emphasis than Lacan on the enduring importance of both semiotic patterns and “imaginary” polysemy within language, both of which she sees as supplements and potential rivals to signification as a means of negotiating our relation to the Thing.⁷

Let us look more closely at Kristeva’s theory of thetic signification. Each thetic act not only connects a signifying phrase, a signification, and an external referent, but also represents the “subject of enunciation” in her mediated interaction with the Thing.⁸ For example, if I say “the Stoics are brilliant,” on the one hand I am using a string of syllables, i.e. a signifying phrase, to express a symbolic signification. I am also connecting this symbolic signification with an external state of affairs, namely the actual being-brilliant of some group of philosophers. But on the other hand, I am positioning *myself*, the subject of enunciation, vis-à-vis the symbolic Other, of which my addressee is the present representative. I am struggling to say what I can never articulate, but which we might gloss as “you frustrate me,” “I hate you,” “I love you,” “please satisfy me,” and so on. To put it another way, beneath every illocutionary function, such as explaining, persuading, and so on, the foundational and unachievable illocutionary aim is to occupy a satisfying position vis-à-vis the Thing.

In fact, it is this illocutionary drive that brings together the three elements of the primary semiotic level in a complete utterance. In *Revolution in Poetic Language* Kristeva writes,

There is no sign that is not thetic and every sign is already the germ of a ‘sentence’ Stoic semiology, which was the first to formulate the

matrix of the sign, had already established this complicity between sign and sentence, making them proofs of each other. (44)

Why does Kristeva say that “every sign is already the germ of a ‘sentence?’”

Because even if a child utters the proto-sign “woof-woof,” she intends the sentence “*this is a woof-woof*”; it is in predication that the subject of enunciation appears. The child is enunciating this proposition *for* her caretaker in the hope of eliciting a response. “Yes,” the father might say adoringly, “that *is* a woof-woof.” Thus it is the “primal want” (for approval, for attention, for satisfaction) behind predicating enunciation that creates the “complicity between sign and sentence.”

Next we must explain why Kristeva claims that the Stoics themselves were “the first to formulate this matrix of the sign” and “had already established this complicity between sign and sentence.” In order to reconstruct her sequence of thought, we must first recall that the Stoics anticipated the modern triad of sign, sense, and reference (Mates 19-26). For the Stoics written or spoken words do not designate bodies or bodily qualities.⁹ Rather, a written or spoken “signifier” (\approx sign) designates an incorporeal “signified” (\approx sense), which expresses an impression made upon the speaker’s soul by the bodily “bearer” (\approx referent) of this signified (LS 33B). The incorporeal signified may be thought of as an “event” or effect, which the speaker understands and asserts as a true or false “sayable” about the underlying bodily cause. Because they are incorporeal, these “sayable events” do not “exist”; they are not “beings.” Rather, they are “somethings,” which “subsist.”¹⁰ Thus the Stoics articulated something like what Kristeva calls “the sign’s triad” or “the matrix of the sign.”

Second, we must follow up Kristeva's vague reference to Émile Bréhier's pioneering study, *La théorie des incorporels dans l'ancien stoïcisme* (cited at *Revolution* 243 n. 49). According to Bréhier, Stoic metaphysics of language

radically separates . . . two planes of being: on the one hand, deep and real being, force; on the other, the plane of facts, which play on the surface of being, and which constitute a multiplicity of incorporeal beings without connection or end (13).¹¹

Later Bréhier speaks of reason's "spontaneity" as the "active cause" which "constructs" rational significations (16).¹² It is Bréhier's reading of the evidence that allows Kristeva to attribute some ancestor of her own psycholinguistics to the Stoics, as she reveals in saying they "had already established this complicity between sign and sentence." Because Bréhier says that facts "play on the surface of being," where reason operates "spontaneously," he opens a space between linguistic thought and the corporeal reality to which it refers. Into this gap Kristeva inserts the dynamism of the primal want, which closes it by conjoining signifying phrases, signified concepts, and bodily states of affairs in the process of enunciation.

We are now in a position to return to the secondary level of Stoic semiology and the Stoic sage's "guarantee" of the "inductive conditional clause," i.e. the connections among sign, signified, and action. Here we must begin by elucidating Kristeva's slightly confusing terminology: at the secondary level, both "event-sign" and "signified" will refer to a primary triad, i.e. a signifying phrase, a conceptual signification, and an external state of affairs. In order to understand how, we must again follow up a vague citation in Kristeva's footnotes ("Psychoanalysis" 79 n. 1), this time to Victor Goldschmidt's *Le système stoïcien et l'idée de temps*. One of the key

passages for Goldschmidt is section eight of Epictetus' *Enkhiridion*: "Don't search for events to happen as you want, but want events to happen as they do" (Goldschmidt 79).¹³ At the point where he introduces this quotation from the *Enkhiridion*, Goldschmidt also cites the same passage of Epictetus's *Discourses* as Kristeva. It is worth quoting Goldschmidt at some length, since his exact wording informs Kristeva's meaning.

In order to "want events as they happen," we must know and understand them, we must *interpret* them. Man, says Epictetus, is born "to contemplate god and his works, and not only to contemplate them, but also to interpret them" [*Disc.* 1.6.19]. "Interpret" means make a connection. (79)

Recall now the quotation from Kristeva with which we began:

Man, says Epictetus, is "born to contemplate God and his works, and not only to contemplate them but also to interpret them" [*Disc.* 1.6.19]. "To interpret" in this context, and I think always, means "to make a connection." ("Psychoanalysis" 79)

It is clear that Kristeva had Goldschmidt's book open to this page as she was writing. Understanding what Goldschmidt means by "making a connection," and what it has to do with "wanting events as they happen," will turn out to be essential for appreciating Kristeva's claims.

For Goldschmidt, the phrase "want what happens" encapsulates the fundamental aspiration of the Stoic life of interpretations, which is to align your volition with the reason of god, whose providential law is also the universal causal nexus of destiny. In other words, god's benevolent and rational plan determines absolutely every sayable event in the Stoic universe. Goldschmidt distinguishes two planes of interpretation in Stoic philosophy, which are two pathways toward cognitive and affective alignment with god. In the first pathway, "the two terms, when we're dealing with events, are separated in time: one, the event-sign, which we must 'interpret,' is given to us in the

present” (79). Note here the term “event-sign,” which Kristeva picks up: “The semiological sciences,” she says, “relate a sign (an event-sign) to a signified in order to act accordingly.” In this pathway the interpreter attempts to align her volition with god’s by inferring, through her grasp of theology and physics, which future event will follow from the present event-sign. She then desires that divinely ordained future event.

But Goldschmidt believes that the emphasis in Stoicism falls instead on the second pathway. This is what Epictetus calls the “use of impressions,” i.e. the cautious scrutiny of our thoughts about whatever is presently happening. In this pathway we do not connect a present event-sign to a future one, since this is often beyond our merely human capacity. Instead, acknowledging our cognitive limitations, we connect a present event-sign to an appropriate reaction on our part. As Goldschmidt says, “The use of impressions brings us already to action. Understanding an impression consists in knowing ‘which virtue we should use in connection with the object that has produced it’” (123, quoting Marcus Aurelius 3.2.3).

Let me illustrate this in terms of Stoic logic and moral psychology. As an example of an “event-sign,” I will adapt a topic from the Roman Stoic Musonius Rufus (XVIII B, esp. 101.3-12): I am at dinner, and the host serves me bread and butter. (This event-sign encompasses an entire primary triad: I represent it to myself with a *signifying phrase*, the incorporeal *signification* of which corresponds to the bodily *state of affairs*.) Now, let us also imagine that I already have in my soul some Stoic beliefs, like that intemperate behavior is vicious, and vice is to be avoided. What, in this case, is the “inductive conditional clause” to which Kristeva refers, which connects an event-sign to a

signified and consequently an action? It is something like this: “If I use too much butter, or eat more than my share of bread, or get food on my clothes, this is intemperate. If this is intemperate, it is to-be-avoided.” Now, according to Stoic psychology, if I assent to the proposition “it is to be avoided,” action follows immediately.¹⁴ Thus in this example I have connected an event-sign, namely “I am eating bread and butter” to a complex signified, namely “using too much butter, eating more than my share, and eating messily are to-be-avoided.” (This too encompasses a primary triad.) Furthermore, I have connected this signified to action: by assenting to its signification, I immediately put myself on guard against bad dining behavior.

Now that we understand how Kristeva reads the Stoic model of interpretation, we are ready to appreciate her critical response. This comes across most clearly in a passage later in “Psychoanalysis and the Polis”:

the person through whom knowledge comes about is not mad, but (as the Stoics have indicated) he is (subject to) death. The time of accurate interpretation, that is, an interpretation in accordance with destiny (or the Other's Phallus), is a moment that includes and completes eternity; interpretation is consequently both happiness and death of time and of the subject: suicide. The transformation of sexual desire into the desire to know an object deprives the subject of this desire and abandons him or reveals him as subject to death. Interpretation, in its felicitous accuracy, expurgating passion and desire, reveals the interpreter as master of his will but at the same time as slave of death. Stoicism is . . . the last great pagan ideology, tributary of nature as mother, raised to the phallic rank of Destiny to be interpreted. (83)

I will not attempt to address every facet of this dense, poetic passage. Rather, I will focus on three claims it advances about the Stoic model of interpretation. First, Stoic interpretation “includes and completes eternity.” Second, it is a sort of “suicide” or death. These first two claims take their inspiration from Goldschmidt, but substantially transform the significance of his reading. Third, Stoic interpretation is an “ideology.” This claim moves

beyond the “epistemological and ethical attitude” of Stoicism in order to encompass its political implications.

It is best to deal with the first two claims together. The first, that Stoic interpretation “includes and completes eternity,” rests on Goldschmidt’s analysis of the interplay of the two pathways of Stoic interpretation. As we have just seen, for Goldschmidt it is because I know my limits that I do not attempt to understand the providential nexus of destiny, but rather focus on aligning my volition with god’s within my immediate circumstances. Thus I put all my energy into buttering that bread as beautifully and virtuously as I can, for example.¹⁵ Yet in “wanting what happens” in this limited way, I nevertheless integrate myself into the entire series of divinely willed events: the divine law that I obey in consuming dinner virtuously is the same law that governs nature (Goldschmidt esp. 101, 156). In fact I am not other than god, for god pervades the entire universe as its active principle (LS 44B, 54A-B), and is particularly concentrated in rational souls (LS 47O.2). This is the key to understanding Stoic compatibilism: insofar as I manage to think and act in accord with nature, divinely determined events become my freely chosen actions. Thus, in a sense, the eternity of providence is telescoped into my action.

The second claim, that Stoic interpretation is somehow suicidal, emerges from the same trend in Goldschmidt’s thinking. According to the Stoics, “living in accordance with nature comes to be the end, . . . engaging in no activity typically forbidden by the universal law, which is the right reason pervading everything and identical to Zeus, who is the director of the administration of existing things” (LS 63C, translation adapted). Furthermore,

they insist that this end, which can also be called “happiness,” can be completed in an instant (LS 63I, SVF 3.54). Goldschmidt explains that on the one hand, this is the instant in which the Stoic sage connects the event-sign with an action that is natural, reasonable, and in alignment with the “universal law” of Zeus. The concordance of sage and god in this instant is perfect; it cannot be improved by temporal extension. On the other hand, because the moral agent’s initiative is integrated into god’s enduring providence, this instant expands throughout time. Thus the moment of virtue satisfies our “desire for eternity” (Goldschmidt 205), and leaves nothing lacking from our happiness. As Goldschmidt perorates,

The instant, as Marcus Aurelius had said, is able to contain and encompass the centuries of cosmic cycles. Thus the instant extends throughout the present of Zeus, like a drop of wine, according to Chrysippus, extends to the dimensions of the ocean and penetrates its entirety (207; cf. 146-51, 198-207)

Goldschmidt’s tone is rhapsodic, but Kristeva’s appropriation of his reading transforms it into a pointed critique. For Kristeva, the eternity completed by the Stoic would be what she calls “time as project, teleology, linear and prospective unfolding; . . . time as history” (“Women’s Time” 17). The “teleological project” here is that of god, whose purpose has determined once and for all what is good and choiceworthy or bad and avoidance-worthy. In effect, God’s volition hypostasizes the symbolic values established for the speaking subject by the thetic break. In other words, divine law and reason are names given to the big Other of signifiers, in which the speaking subject has invested her drive energy at the moment of surrendering the narcissistic jouissance of the mother-child union. Kristeva believes this thetic break is experienced as a sacrifice or loss (“castration”), which reiterates and

exacerbates the “primal want” underlying all interpersonal relations (*Sense* 76-85). When symbolic value is fixed once and for all, this loss becomes irremediable. This is why Kristeva calls the totalizing instant of Stoic interpretation a kind of suicide or death. “Time . . . in Western philosophy always refers to the time of *death*,” she writes (*This Incredible Need* 44). The consequences for the subject of this totalization of value and time vary, but might include absence of affect, evacuation of meaning from the world, or compensatory, violent acting-out.¹⁶

The alternative for Kristeva is to avoid temporal finalization and evaluative totalization. She believes this is possible because, as I emphasized earlier, symbolic signification continues to be underpinned by semiotic articulation and imaginary polysemy, both of which go back to our non-linguistic relations to our primary caregivers. These a-signifying modes of relating, emoting, and enjoying combine with thetic signification in “vital” and “creative” speech, which Kristeva calls *signifiance*. Examples in Kristeva’s work include the speech of poets and literary authors in general, which Kristeva calls “a kind of second birth” (*Revolution* 70); the discourse of literary appreciation, through which we participate in the “sharable singularity” of creative “genius” (*This Incredible Need* 29-41; *Sense* 27-9); the speech of psychoanalysts, who avoid “playing dead and adopting a stoic apathy” (*New Maladies* 73) in order to make each analysis a “work of art” (*New Maladies* 34), combining thetic reason with counter-transferential jouissance (*New Maladies* 3-102, esp. 34-5; “Psychoanalysis” 81, 83-4, 86-7; *Sense* 62-4); the masochistic sublimation of Christian mystics (*This Incredible Need* 47-63); and—most controversially—the speech of maternal passion (*This Incredible*

Need 42-7).¹⁷ All of these modes of interpretation, i.e., of “making a connection,” encourage the creativity and vitality supposedly choked off by Stoic totalization. In other words, they make it possible to initiate genuinely new beginnings, breaking the linear teleology of historical time; and they facilitate the sublimation of drive in language, imbuing it with affect and meaningfulness.

Kristeva’s third claim is simply the politicized consequence of the first two, as is exemplified by her commentary on the *Republic* of Zeno, founder of the Stoa (*Strangers* 57-63).¹⁸ Given the totalization of symbolic value and exclusion of semiotic and imaginary interventions, Kristeva suggests that Stoic politics can only oscillate between two undesirable tendencies. On the one hand is the anomia of each individual’s obedience to divine volition, which replaces positive law. This is how Kristeva interprets the testimony that Zeno permitted cannibalism and incest in his ideal city.¹⁹ On the other, institutionalizing values attributed to divine volition could lead to totalitarianism. To both of these Kristeva prefers a middle way, in which citizens preserve the creativity and vitality of desire and jouissance, which singularize them, but use their shared investment in symbolic signification to collaborate in constructing narratives and making decisions.²⁰ “The living political bond,” she writes elsewhere, “understood and practiced as a sharing of creativity, calls upon the singularity of each person: had ‘one’ forgotten this?” (*This Incredible Need* 13)

2. Response to Kristeva

I have now completed my clarification of Kristeva’s reading of Stoicism and explanation of her critical response. In the remainder of this article I would

like to offer some thoughts about the merits of Kristeva's criticism. In other words, I want to consider its importance for the growing number of people interested in Stoicism not only as an intriguing historical phenomenon, but as a source of guidance for pursuing wellbeing, resilience, or freedom. In the process I will illustrate the importance of drawing on the full range of Stoic authors from antiquity, here including Hierocles, Musonius Rufus, and Cornutus, as well as doxographies and well-known Stoics like Seneca or Epictetus.²¹

I will first suggest that Kristeva's analysis sheds considerable light on *some* aspects of *some* Stoic texts. Let me begin with a general point of doctrine. One could plausibly argue that Stoic moral psychology revolves around a fundamental and non-rational drive, which is called *oikeiōsis*. No single word in English effectively translates of this word, though "appropriation" serves best. What it connotes is each organism's impulse to preserve and perfect what belongs to it: in Greek its *sustasis*, in English its "constitution."²² Seneca defines a constitution as "the hegemonic part of the soul disposed in a certain way toward the body" (*Ep. Mor.* 121.10).²³ The disposition of the hegemonic part of the soul toward the body is the sustaining principle of an animal's vital unity.²⁴ Every animal is "pleased with," "loves," "yearns for" and "thinks well" of this vital unity, which is the animal's self.²⁵ The character of this vital unity develops over time, so that a human infant, for example, appropriates a different constitution than she will as an adolescent, an adult, and so on (*Seneca, Ep. Mor.* 121.14-18). Up to a certain stage this happens without cognitive mediation, just as other animals are (supposedly) impelled to preserve their own constitutions. But at a certain stage something

changes in human beings. As Diogenes Laertius reports, “since reason . . . has been bestowed on rational beings, to live correctly in accordance with reason comes to be natural for them. For reason supervenes as the craftsman of impulse” (LS 57A). In other words, whereas animals are automatically impelled toward what will preserve their constitutions, in humans reason, or *logos*, should come to supervise impulses. Moreover, precisely this use of reason, since it is “natural” for mature human beings, becomes the central feature in their constitution and the primary object of appropriation (Seneca *Ep. Mor.* 121.14). The right and legitimate use of reason is to align our volition with that of Zeus, who, as we saw earlier, is identical with “right reason” (LS 63C). Thus appropriation is designed to culminate in the resolve to perfect our reason, which means harmonizing it with divine Reason.

I would like to cautiously suggest a limited comparison between this developmental psychology and that of Kristeva. Granted, there is a striking difference between Kristeva’s flexible thinking about the drives, which she sometimes expresses by referring to the “archaic Thing,” and the Stoics’ fundamental drive toward self-preservation and self-perfection. Nevertheless, there is a thought-provoking resemblance between key moments in the two developmental theories, namely the Stoic appropriation of reason and what Kristeva calls the thetic break. The thetic break marks the epochal shift of libidinal investment from parental bodies or associated sensations to symbolic signifiers. In a similar way, one could argue that in the Stoic account, appropriation of reason shifts the fundamental impetus from things to reasoning about things.

Let me exemplify. On the Stoic account, a child is immediately concerned with her own mental and bodily integrity, and even adults may be immediately concerned with the well-being of their children, friends, or spouses.²⁶ But in order for reason to fulfill its role as the “craftsman of impulse,” we should not desire the well-being of our own bodies or those of our children, friends, or spouses for their own sakes. Rather, we should wish to act in conformity with universal law and right reason, and perceive that it is legitimate and reasonable (in most circumstances) to cherish our bodies, children, friends and spouses. Thus reason would intervene as the primary object of appropriative feelings, in a sense estranging us from prior intimacies.

If there is anything to this reading, it could be taken to embed deep in Stoic theory some of the weaknesses criticized by Kristeva. But even if this comparison at the level of theory turns out to be indefensible, at the level of practice it is hard to deny that Stoics sometimes adopt the role of ideology police; according to Kristeva, “wardens of repression and rationalizers of the social contract in its most solid substratum (discourse) . . . carry the Stoic tradition to its conclusion” (*Desire* 24). There are innumerable examples of this, but for reasons of space I will provide just one.

Although many texts by the imperial Stoic Hierocles have been preserved on papyrus or in the anthology of Johannes Stobaeus, they have only recently become easily accessible in the edition and translation of Ramelli and Konstan. In one Hierocles writes that “we should guard the laws of our fatherland as if they were second gods of a kind, and live by their guidance” (70-3). In fact “second gods” is a favorite simile for Hierocles, who also says we should treat our fatherland itself and our parents “like second

gods” (68-9, 82-3). This is more than a simile, of course: it points toward divine law and reason as the preeminent elements in our own constitution. But for Kristeva, Stoic god is merely a hypostasis of repressive symbolic values.

Thus it should come as no surprise when Hierocles writes,

I for my part welcome Zaleucus, the [legendary] lawgiver of the Locrians, who made it law that anyone who proposed a new law should do it with a noose around his throat, so that he should be instantly strangled and die, unless he rearranged the original constitution of the state in a way that was most emphatically profitable to the community.
(71)

And it is not only the laws that must be treated as second gods. Hierocles adds that “No less than the laws, customs must also be guarded, those that are truly ancestral. . . . Custom aims to be a kind of unwritten law, which has enrolled as its noble lawgiver the satisfaction of all those who make use of it.”

From a Kristevan perspective one might make two observations about these passages. First, Hierocles is indeed operating as a “warden of repression and rationalizer of the social contract”: in effect, he makes the symbolic values enshrined in civic law and social custom unbreakable parameters for choice and action. Under the regime of Zaleucus, there is precious little room for creative renewal through a life-giving return to pre-rational jouissance and imagination. Who would risk democratic innovation, if the cost of any mistake were “that he should be instantly strangled and die?” Second, one might detect in this fantasy of violent reprisal, which is authorized by the legendary paternal lawgiver, the return of what has been repressed by Stoic rationalism. In other words, the energies excluded by the rigidification of symbolic value return as violent acting-out, even if only at the level of rhetoric.

These considerations lead me to suspect that Kristeva has identified a dangerous temptation within Stoicism, something excluded from the Greek and Roman Stoics' own self-understanding. However, in other ways I think that Kristeva's reading is very one-sided. These all come back to a fundamental error, namely her consistent reading of Stoic doctrines about virtue as straightforward descriptions of the lived experience of Stoicism. In fact the ideal of virtue, which is embodied in the sage, operates rather as an organizing fantasy. Commentators in general pay too little attention to a fundamental contradiction within Stoicism: on the one hand, by explicit doctrine virtue can be achieved; on the other, by unbreakable convention no practitioner can claim that she or any other Stoic has achieved virtue.²⁷ For this reason I think we should view Stoic virtue roughly as Jonathan Lear suggests we view Aristotelian contemplation. "Any form of life," Lear writes,

will tend to generate a fantasy of what it is to get outside of that life. This is because life is experienced, consciously and unconsciously, as being lived under pressure—and it is correlative to that experience that there is a fantasy of release. (48-9)

Like Aristotle's fantasy of self-sufficient contemplation, the Stoic fantasy needs to be theoretically achievable in order to make life meaningful. In Kristeva's terms, this allows it to harness drive energy to symbolic significations. Yet it also needs to be practically unachievable, or else it would implode and give way to a new fantasy.

This insight has both general and specific consequences. The general consequence is that we should acknowledge how much creative improvisation is involved in the Stoic effort to live in harmony with divine volition. Although Stoics sometimes come across as vindictive agents of symbolic law, they also place a great deal of emphasis on circumstantial complexity. An infinite

distance separates fidelity to general ethical guidelines from perception of the virtuous thing to do in any particular situation. This is why Stoics insist that all errors are equal (Arius Didymus 11o).²⁸ The sage must use her creative initiative in order to cross this chasm. Such creativity is emblemized by the unorthodox Stoic Aristo, who entirely rejects ethical guidelines, and focuses exclusively on the sage's "adventitious capacity" to respond to "opportunity" and "circumstance" (Boys-Stones "Aristo's Psychology"). But even within orthodox Stoicism, which aims to strike a balance between extemporaneity and principled foresight, the upshot is that every Stoic decision can in principle make room for creative interventions.

More specific consequences reveal themselves in those passages of Stoic texts in which the yearning to understand and imitate god becomes explicitly thematized. It is here more than anywhere that we might glimpse something like a relation to the archaic Thing, at the boundaries where a penumbra of drive energy suffuses thetic reasoning. I will offer just two examples.

The first comes from Musonius Rufus, who is perhaps the Stoic author most given to ideological policing. As I discuss elsewhere ("Philosophy and Sex"), his handling of sex, eating, and grooming is astoundingly sanctimonious. Yet events in Musonius' biography, such as his attempt to reason with Vitellius' troops during their march against Rome (nearly a fatal miscalculation: Tacitus, *Histories* 3.81), powerfully exemplify the demand for improvisation in the enactment of virtue. Moreover, his lectures are unusually rich in fantasies about divine volition, as I will exemplify with reference to *Concerning Nourishment*.²⁹

In this discourse Musonius encourages his listeners to restrict their diet to uncooked vegetables and dairy products, but above all he exhorts them to avoid meat. “Nourishment from the plants of the earth,” he claims, “is naturally suited to us. . . . So is nourishment from animals that are not harmed, especially domestic animals. . . . like ripe fruit, some vegetables, milk, cheese, and honeycombs” (XVIII A 94.12-95.7). By contrast,

He used to say that [nourishment by meat] was heavier and somehow impeded thought and cognition, because the rising vapors from it were muddier and darkened the soul. So people who eat a lot of meat appear to be slower of mind. (95.11-96.1)

Here we can see the beginnings of a rational justification for avoiding meat, which is grounded in physiology: when meat is digested, it produces “rising vapors” that impede cognition. From this perspective, Musonius is sketching an enthymeme grounded in symbolic values. This allows him to understand the world, and through that understanding to achieve satisfaction.³⁰ Yet we should also notice the prevalence of images of heaviness, slowness, muddiness, and darkness. Added to the reminiscences of ripe fruit, vegetables, milk, cheese, and honeycombs, this creates a rich sensual landscape. From this perspective, Musonius is discharging drive energy through a phantasmagoria of images that underpins or bypasses rational argumentation.

This interplay of reasoning and fantasy climaxes in an exhortation to imitate the celestial gods. “Since human beings are the most akin of earthly organisms to the gods,” Musonius says,

we should also be nourished in a manner most similar to them. Now, the exhalations of earth and water carried up to them are enough for the gods. So if we took the lightest and purest nourishment, he said, we would take the most similar nourishment to the gods. (96.1-6)

Let us pause and give this strangely literal comparison of human and divine nourishment due consideration. Like the preceding, it is structured by an enthymeme grounded in theoretical commitments. The Stoics certainly believe that humans are the earthly organisms most akin to the gods. Moreover, they believe that the foundation of this kinship is our shared rationality.³¹ Even the physiology of our rational souls is similar: both are constituted by “breath,” which is a compound of compacting moisture and expansive fire (LS 47G-H, J, O-Q). This helps to explain the role of “rising vapors” and “exhalations” in Musonius’ comparison.³² Within this breath the compacting moisture is responsible for inward tension, which stabilizes organic forms (LS I.288). The expansive fire is the intelligent, directive element; thus Zeno calls the sun a “fiery kindling from the vaporous rising of the sea” (SVF Zeno 121), and Zeus himself is defined as “intelligent, designing fire which methodically proceeds toward the creation of the world” (LS 46A.1). This helps to explain why Musonius counsels avoidance of “dark” and “heavy” meat. It is on the basis of these elemental homologies between human and celestial souls that Musonius infers we should prefer light, pure nourishment.

On the other hand, we should also acknowledge how semiotic investments may underpin this line of reasoning. In making vital heat and breath the signifiers of human kinship with the gods, Stoic theory already makes respiratory and circulatory rhythms a domain in which semiotic and symbolic investments can easily converge. In focusing particularly on nourishment, Musonius accentuates this convergence. Henceforth when I eat my rustic cheese and honey, I can think and feel that I am ingesting the

rationality of the gods.³³ To put it in psychoanalytic terms, this is an example of oral introjection: beyond my rational alignment with god, I will be replaying a primal bodily relation to and identification with him. Perhaps some of the strangeness of Musonius' argument comes from the way in which this drive facilitation and imaginary fantasy combine with its implicit argumentative structure.³⁴

I turn now to my final example, which comes from Cornutus' *Survey of Greek Theology*. This important text has not yet been satisfyingly edited, much less translated into English.³⁵ Cornutus addresses it to an unnamed "boy," with whom he is discussing the allegorical meanings of Greek religious traditions. This text belongs to a domain of Stoic literature that scholars have found enigmatic. Why, they wonder, are Stoics so interested in the myths, iconography,³⁴ and even rituals of the Olympian pantheon, which rational theology could conceivably render superfluous? (Long "Stoic Readings"; Boys-Stones "Allegory," esp. 209–15; Algra, esp. 234–8; Lampe, "Obeying Your Father")

Kristeva's work points toward a new way of resolving this enigma. For Kristeva allegory is a paradigmatic example of how "the imaginary" operates "Like a tense link between Thing and Meaning, the unnameable and the proliferation of signs, the silent affect and the ideality that designates and goes beyond it" (*Black Sun* 100). In other words, imaginative constructions are halfway between symbolic signification and delirious proximity to the archaic Thing. For example, the allegorical imagination both "disowns" the surface meaning, thus clinging to the archaic Thing, and makes associative leaps to symbolism via acoustic and visual images, thus generating new

quasi-meanings – meanings in which we only halfway believe, but which we therefore enjoy more (or at least differently).³⁶

Take Cornutus' discussion of the god Hermes. This discussion extends over six pages of the standard text (20-26), encompassing etymology of his name and epithets, exegesis of his literary and statuary images, and observations about some aspects of his cult. What binds this discussion together is Cornutus' initial assertion that Hermes represents reason: "Hermes happens to be reason, which the gods sent to us from heaven, making humans alone of earthly animals rational, which is the best thing the gods themselves possess" (20.18-21).³⁷ This assertion is justified by the etymological derivation of the name *Hermēs* from the phrase *erein mēsasthai*, meaning "contrive to speak" (ibid.). This inaugural assertion grounds the entire fantasy that follows, which we might call an imaginary celebration of rationality.

I will pick out just three moments in this sublime fiction. The first is Cornutus' explanation of the epithet "Hermes of the golden rod." "Of the golden rod (*khrusorrhapis*)," Cornutus writes, "because a beating (*rhapismos*) from him is very precious, since timely admonitions and the attention of those who listen is worth a great deal" (21.15-8). In other words, verbal castigation is like being beaten with a golden rod! Hermes' rod (*rhabdos*) returns later in the discussion,

"with which," as Homer writes, "he soothes the eyes of whomever he wishes," i.e. the eyes of the mind, "and arouses those who are dreaming" [Homer, *Iliad* 24.343-4] – for he's easily able both to encourage those who are slack and to sedate those who are excited. For the same reason people believed he sent dreams and was a prophet, turning impressions whichever way he wanted. (22.10-18)

In other words, Hermes' rod represents the power of the words to magically stimulate, sedate, or generally lead listeners wherever the speaker wishes. If we permit ourselves to suspect this is slightly phallic, Cornutus will reward our audacity:

The ancients made older, bearded statues of Hermes with erect genitals, but younger, smooth-cheeked statues with flaccid ones, letting it be surmised that in those of advanced age reason is generative and complete, but fruitless and incomplete in immature men. (23.16-22)

In other words, mature reason is like an *erect penis*; rational admonition is like a "very precious" beating with an erect golden penis; with this erect penis you can guide your listeners wherever you wish. None of this adds anything to the symbolic signification of "reason", but it certainly enriches its *significance*. In other words, it doesn't change the meaning of rationality, but it makes it more *meaningful*, whether you find it enjoyable, amusing, or repulsive. For these are all metastases of *jouissance*.

3. Conclusions

For Kristeva, as we have seen, the "true life of interpretations" is one in which each individual's rational commitments are always amenable to revision from two directions: first, by engagement with the a-signifying internal forces of imaginary and semiotic *jouissance*; and second, by engagement with other people, including those people's imaginary and semiotic fantasies and compulsions. That is why Kristeva speaks of a "true life of interpretations (in the plural)" ("Psychoanalysis," 37): she believes that healthy ethics and politics combine shared reason with a plurality of unreasonable and sometimes unshareable impulses.

From this perspective Kristeva criticizes the Stoic life as one that totalizes interpretation, thus impeding creative renewal, tolerance, and

cooperation. In response I have suggested that Kristeva is partly right: Stoics do sometimes display a proclivity toward ideological rigidity. But at the same time, parts of their “ideology” build in the sort of stimulation for creativity that Kristeva demands. For example, they aspire to alignment with god’s volition, which is not even in theory knowable. Furthermore, even the partial alignment represented by virtue, which in theory is achievable, in practice is an ever-receding goalpost. Thus it should come as no surprise that creative improvisation appears in many corners of Stoic literature – although these receive too little attention from modern historians and practitioners of Stoicism.

If the preceding is at all sound, several consequences might follow for “modern Stoicism”:

1) Alongside the emphasis on reforming beliefs in the cognitive-behavioral reception of Stoicism, we should give more explicit recognition to imaginative and semiotic elements. These are often implicitly present already. For example, the *Stoic Week 2014 Handbook* introduces the exercise of “Morning Meditation” by saying,

Marcus Aurelius talks about walking on your own to a quiet place at daybreak and meditating upon the stars and the rising Sun, preparing for the day ahead. You can also do this at home, sitting on the end of your bed, or standing in front of the mirror in your bathroom, *and still think of the sun rising against a backdrop of stars*. (Gill et al. 9; italics mine)

In other words, the sensory or imaginary contexts of cognitive exercises make a significant difference. In fact, one of the reasons that Stoicism is more than a primitive precursor to CBT, and thus makes a real contribution, is its imaginary richness.

2) The emphasis on “technologies of the self” in the post-Foucauldian reception of Stoicism risks entanglement in the networks of power within which Foucault himself struggled to find a sort of immanent freedom. Stoic self-cultivation must not be reduced to any fixed catalogue of exercises directed toward sharply defined virtues, which tend to become ossified. Rather, we should give more attention to collaborative improvisation.

Foucault gestures in this direction when he implicitly connects “askesis” to creativity, especially shared creativity. “Askesis,” he says, is “the work that one performs on oneself in order to transform oneself or make the self appear” (*Foucault Live* 311). This interview dates from 1981, during the period of Foucault’s greatest immersion in Stoic “technologies of the self.” The word “askesis” could be taken to imply exercises of self-discipline oriented toward normalizing “virtues.” But that, of course, is not what Foucault has in mind:

Homosexuality is an historical occasion to re-open affective and relationship virtualities, not so much through the intrinsic qualities of the homosexual, but due to the biases against the position he occupies; in a certain sense diagonal lines that he can trace in the social fabric permit him to make these virtualities visible. (311)

What Foucault says particularly of gay communities in the 1980s should also be true, to some extent, in all communities. To put it another way, the affective, cooperative work of pursuing *virtues* can disclose surprising new *virtualities*.

3) Rationalism today is often associated with secularism. By contrast, after Kristeva we can perceive in Stoicism (and have a framework for analyzing) the synergy between intense theoretical and practical reasoning and the fantasy of harmonization with the sacred. Modern Stoicism could thus

become an interlocutor in the so-called “return to religion” in continental philosophy, including in Kristeva’s own recent work.

None of these suggestions will bring us to The Truth about either Kristeva or Stoicism. However, all of them could expand and enrich these spiritual, ethical, and political traditions of thought and action.

Works Cited

For Greek and Latin works I have used my own translations from the standard scholarly editions, unless an edition or translation appears below.

Abbreviations:

LS = Long & Sedley, 1986

SVF = Arnim & Adler, 1905-1914

Algra, Kempe. “Stoic Philosophical Theology and Graeco-Roman Religion.” *God and Cosmos in Stoicism*. Ed. R. Salles. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009. 224-51.

Arius Didymus. *Epitome of Stoic Ethics*. Ed. and trans. Arthur J. Pomeroy. Atlanta: Society for Biblical Literature, 1999.

Arnim, J. von and M. Adler, eds. *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*. 4 vols. Leipzig: Teubner, 1905-1914.

Boys-Stones, George. 2003. “The Stoics’ Two Types of Allegory.” *Metaphor, Allegory, and the Classical Tradition*. Ed. G. Boys-Stones. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003. 189-216.

---. “The ἐπελευστική δύναμις in Aristo’s Psychology of Action.” *Phronesis* 41 (1996): 75–94.

Bréhier, Émile. *La théorie des incorporels dans l’ancien stoïcisme*. 1908. 3rd ed. Paris: Vrin, 1962.

Brennan, Tad. 2005. *The Stoic Life: Emotions, Duties, and Fate*. Oxford: Oxford UP.

Brittain, Charles. 2005. “Common Sense: concepts, definitions and meanings in and out of the Stoa.” *Language and Learning*. Ed. D. Frede and B. Inwood. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005. 164-209.

Cornutus. *Cornuti Theologiae Graecae Compendium*. Ed. Carl Lang. Leipzig: Teubner, 1881.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Logic of Sense*. 1969. Trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale. Ed. Constantin V. Bondas. London: Bloomsbury, 2004.

Dyson, Henry. *Prolepsis and Ennoia in the Early Stoa*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009.

Foucault, Michel. *Foucault Live (Interviews, 1961-1984)*. Ed. Sylvère Lotringer. Trans. Lysa Hochroth and John Johnston. New York: Semiotexte, 1989.

---. *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the College de France 1981-1982*. 2001. Trans. G. Burchell. Ed. F. Gross. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005.

- . *The History of Sexuality, Volume 3. The Care of the Self*. Trans. Robert Hurley. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988.
- Gill, Christopher, Patrick Ussher, John Sellars, Tim Lebon, Jules Evans, Gill Garratt, and Donald Robertson. *Stoic Week 2014 Handbook: Live Like a Stoic for a Week*. 2014. 25 November 2014.
<http://modernstoicism.com/course/view.php?id=5§ion=2>.
- Goldschmidt, Victor. *Le système stoïcien et l'idée de temps*. Paris: Vrin, 1953.
- Hadot, Pierre. *What Is Ancient Philosophy?* Trans. M. Chase. Cambridge, Mass: Belknap, 2005.
- Hierocles. *Hierocles the Stoic: Elements of Ethics, Fragments, and Excerpts*. Ed. and comm. Ilaria Ramelli, trans. David Konstan. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009.
- Irvine, W. B. *A Guide to the Good Life: The Ancient Art of Stoic Joy*. New York: Oxford UP, 2009.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia, 1989.
- . *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. Oxford: Blackwell, 1981.
- . *Intimate Revolt. The Powers and Limits of Psychoanalysis Volume 2*. Trans. Jeanine Herman. New York: Columbia, 2002.
- . "Lacan ou la portée historique de la psychanalyse: Entretien avec Julia Kristeva." 2011. 10/27/2014. <http://www.kristeva.fr/lacan-le-point-septembre2011.html>.
- . *New Maladies of the Soul*. Trans. Ross Guberman. New York: Columbia, 1995.
- . *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. trans. L. S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia, 1982.
- . "Psychoanalysis and the Polis." Trans. M. Waller. *Critical Inquiry* 9.1 (1982): 77-92.
- . *Revolution in Poetic Language*. trans. M. Waller. New York: Columbia, 1984.
- . *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt. The Powers and Limits of Psychoanalysis Volume 1*. Trans. Jeanine Herman. New York: Columbia, 2000.
- . *Strangers to Ourselves*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991.
- . *This Incredible Need to Believe*. Trans. Beverley Bie Brahic. New York: Columbia, 2009.
- . "Women's Time." Trans. Alice Jardine and Harry Blake. *Signs* 7.1 (1981): 13-35.
- Lampe, Kurt. "Obeying Your Father: Stoic Theology between Myth and Masochism." *Classical Myth and Psychoanalysis: Ancient and Modern Stories of the Self*. Ed. V. Zajko and E. O'Gorman. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013. 183-98.
- . "Philosophy and Sex." *The Oxford Companion to Roman Philosophy*. Ed. W. Shearin and R. Fletcher. New York: Oxford USA, forthcoming.
- Lear, Jonathan. *Happiness, Death, and the Remainder of Life*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 2000.

- Long, A. A. "Hierocles on *oikeiōsis* and self-perception." *Stoic Studies*. Berkeley: University of California, 1996. 250-63.
- . "Stoic Readings of Homer." *Homer's Ancient Readers*. Ed. R. Lamberton and J. J. Keaney. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992. 41-66.
- Mates, Benson. *Stoic Logic*. Berkeley: University of California P, 1961.
- McAfee, Noëlle. *Julia Kristeva*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Most, Glenn. "Cornutus and Stoic Allegoresis: A Preliminary Report." *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt II* 36.3 (1989): 2014-2065.
- Musonius Rufus. *Reliquiae*. Ed. O. Hense. Leipzig: Teubner, 1905.
- Oliver, Kelly. *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-Bind*. Bloomington: Indiana UnP, 1993.
- Pies, R. Everything Has Two Handles: *The Stoic's Guide to the Art of Living*. Lanham: Hamilton Books, 2008.
- Reydams-Schils, Gretchen. *The Roman Stoics. Self, Responsibility, and Affection*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2005.
- Robertson, Donald. *The Philosophy of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) : Stoic Philosophy as Rational and Cognitive Psychotherapy*. London: Karnac, 2010.
- Schofield, Malcolm. *The Stoic Idea of the City*, with a new foreward by Martha Nussbaum. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1999.
- Still, A. and W. Dryden. *The Historical and Philosophical Context of Rational Psychotherapy: The Legacy of Epictetus*. London: Karnac, 2012.
- Vernant, Jean-Pierre. *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays*. Ed. Froma I. Zeitlin. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1991.
- Voelke, André-Jean. *Les rapports avec autrui dans la philosophie grecque d'Aristote a Panétius*. Paris: Vrin, 1961.
- Vogt, Katja M. *Law, Reason, and the Cosmic City: Political Philosophy in the Early Stoa*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008.

¹ Although Foucault delivered his lectures in 1981-82, they only reached publication in 2001. Of course, some of this material made it into *The Care of the Self*, which reached publication much earlier. Deleuze's *Logic of Sense* had also raised Stoicism to prominence in French philosophy. Examples of recent, therapeutically oriented reception include Pies, Irvine, Robertson, Still and Dryden, and many other publications cited by the University of Exeter's stupendously successful "Stoicism Today" and "Stoic Week" projects (<http://blogs.exeter.ac.uk/stoicismtoday/about/>; <http://modernstoicism.com>).

² The following does not aspire to be an exhaustive index to Stoicism in Kristeva: *Desire* 24, 125; "Psychoanalysis" 79-80, 83, 92; *Revolution* 40, 44; *Strangers* 56-63; *New Maladies* 73, 82, 88; *Intimate* 74-5. I would also take Stoicism to be one inspiration for the "sad philosopher" of *This Incredible Need* 41.

³ See the conclusion of "Psychoanalysis and the Polis": "I would like the above remarks to be taken both as a 'free association' and as the consequence of a certain position. I would want them to be considered not only an epistemological discussion but also a personal involvement (need I say one of desire?) in the dramas of thought, personality, and contemporary politics" (92).

⁴ I allude to what Hadot calls the "existential choice" or "fundamental choice" of each post-Socratic Greek philosophy (102, 114-15, 126-28).

⁵ My overview draws on all of Kristeva's works, but see especially *Revolution* 25-30, 43-56; *Black Sun* 40-42; *Sense* 32-90. I necessarily smooth over some variations in these accounts. Compare McAfee 13-27. Oliver remains an excellent introduction to Kristeva, but does not address language acquisition independently.

⁶ She puts this most carefully in *This Incredible Need to Believe*: "this I who speaks unveils himself to himself inasmuch as he is constructed in a vulnerable bond with a strange *object* or an ek-static *other*, an ab-ject: this is the *sexual thing* (others will say: the object of the sexual drive whose 'carrier wave' is the death drive)" (28).

⁷ Although Kristeva was profoundly influenced by Lacan, her training was not Lacanian (see "Lacan ou la portée"), and it is important not to conflate their ideas.

⁸ In this Kristeva obviously parallels Deleuze's triad of signifying, denoting, and manifesting (16-28), though her emphases are different.

⁹ To be more precise, "complete sayables" (e.g. propositions) do not designate bodies. However, nouns and pronouns designate qualities, which are bodily (LS 33M).

¹⁰ For "event" (*pragma*, *sumbama*, *accidens*) see LS 33B.2-3, 33q (only in volume 2), Seneca *Ep. Mor.* 117.3. For effect, see LS 55A-D. For the basics of Stoic metaphysics, see LS 27.

¹¹ Goldschmidt expands on this line of interpretation when he compares a certain trend in the thought of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius to Kantian critical idealism (119-21). Of course, this passage in Bréhier features prominently in Deleuze as well (8).

¹² He is thinking in particular of concept formation and the testimony of D.L. 7.53. For recent discussions of the Stoic theory of concept formation, see Brittain, Dyson.

¹³ Goldschmidt relates this to Marcus Aurelius 7.23 ("Does something happen to me? I accept"), of which he says, "So we must 'accept' the event and want it" (100).

¹⁴ Strictly speaking the ensuing "impulse" will be directed at the *predicate* of the proposition "this is to-be-avoided." See SVF 3.91 = LS 33J; SVF 3.89; compare Arius Didymus *Ep.* 6c.

¹⁵ Goldschmidt aptly cites Epictetus *Discourses* 1.7.32-33, which illustrates this principle extremely well (169 n. 1).

¹⁶ Note that, à propos of "the time of history," Kristeva adds, "A psychoanalyst would call this 'obsessional time,' recognizing in the mastery of time the true structure of the slave" ("Women's Time" 17). In other words, she directly contradicts the Stoic claim that alignment with transcendent value equals freedom. Thus she also implies that Stoicism is basically an "obsessional" cultural structure. On the relation of obsessional neurosis to the symptoms I have just described, see especially *New Maladies* 44-65.

¹⁷ The foregoing citations are merely illustrative: Kristeva revisits most of these themes many times across her works.

¹⁸ Zeno's *Republic* is lost, but various sources inform us about its contents. Here again it is worthwhile tracing a vague reference in one of Kristeva's footnotes (*Strangers* 198 n. 31): her reading of Zeno's *Republic* and most (if not all) her exact citations of Greek and Roman texts turn out to derive from Voelke 114-31, 143-5, 152-62, 185-90.

¹⁹ For more recent scholarship on this topic, see Schofield, Vogt.

²⁰ *This Incredible Need* 71-6. Kristeva makes a subtly different point in "Psychoanalysis and the Polis": there she emphasizes how effective political interpretation, like psychoanalytic interpretation, needs to harness desire rather than sticking to "objective" rationality ("Psychoanalysis" 86-7).

²¹ Other significant authors who are generally neglected by neo-Stoicism include Manilius, Cleomedes, and Persius. Aratus and Lucan also deserve consideration, although their relation to Stoicism is more complex.

²² The following summary presumes the continuity of what are sometimes distinguished as “self-appropriation” and “social appropriation.” In this I agree with Brennan 154-68. Key testimonia regarding appropriation include Diogenes Laertius 7.85-6 = LS 57A, Cicero *Fin.* 3.62-8 (excerpted by LS 57F), Seneca *Ep. Mor.* 121 (excerpted by LS 57B), Hierocles *Elements of Ethics* esp. VI-IX = p. 16-25 (excerpted by LS 57C, D, G), and Aulus Gellius 12.5.7 = SVF 3.181.

²³ Ramelli helpfully connects this definition with Hierocles’ explanation that the hegemonic part of every organism perceives all parts of both the organism’s body and its soul (55, citing Hierocles *Elements of Ethics* IV.44-52 = p. 12-13). On this Stoic theory of “proprioception” see Long “Hierocles.”

²⁴ “Relative disposition” is the fourth of the so-called Stoic ontological “categories” or “genera,” on which see the testimony gathered at LS 29. Note also that virtue is defined as the soul in a certain disposition (Seneca *Ep. Mor.* 113.2). Compare Hierocles *El. Eth.* IV.27-53 = p. 12-13, which connects the “tensive movement” of the soul, which is a “sustaining power,” with the organism’s continuous and complete self-perception, which occurs by the oscillation of this tensive movement outward from the hegemonic part to the extremities and back again.

²⁵ The Greek terms are *aresein* and *euarestein* (Hierocles *El. Eth.* VI.40-5 = p. 18-19), *sphodron himeron* (ibid. VII.1-5 = p. 18-19), *philautias* (ibid. VII.20-5 = p. 20-1), and *eunoētikōs* (ibid. IX.5-9 = p. 24-5).

²⁶ On bodily integrity, see LS 57A.1-3, Sen. *Ep. Mor.* 121.18-24, Hierocles *El. Eth.* VI.54-VII.50 = p. 18-21; on children, LS 57F.1; on friends, Hierocles *El. Eth.* 11.15-20 = p. 28-9; on spouses, see the discussion of the treatment of marriage by Antipater, Musonius, Hierocles, and Seneca by Reydams-Schils 143-76.

²⁷ This convention is never (to my knowledge) articulated, a silence that in itself deserves further analysis. The neo-Aristotelian Alexander of Aphrodisias attributes to the Stoics the claim that “there have been just one or two good men, as their fables maintain, like some absurd and unnatural creature rarer than the Ethiopian’s phoenix” (LS 57N.2).

²⁸ Similarly, an infinite distance separates vice from virtue: “just as in the sea the man an arm’s length from the surface is drowning no less than the one who has sunk five hundred fathoms, so even those who are getting close to virtue are no less in a state of vice than those who are far from it” (LS 61T).

²⁹ See also my reading of Musonius’ “masochistic” jubilation in *Whether We Should Always Obey Our Fathers*, which complements the argument I make here (“Obeying Your Father,” 192-7).

³⁰ For Kristeva the object of “the need to believe” is “a truth that keeps me, makes me exist” (*This Incredible Need* 3); such a truth recalls the self-certainty of mother-child “oceanic feeling” or the loving support from the “imaginary father” (*This Incredible Need* 1-10).

³¹ A claim advanced in innumerable Stoic texts, e.g. LS 57F.3, 63D-E, Epictetus *Discourses* 2.8.10-12.

³² Compare Seneca’s paeon to the nourishing “breaths” of the earth at *Natural Questions* 2.16.1-3.

³³ In “A General Theory of Sacrifice,” Vernant writes, “if one circumvents sacrifice . . . by consuming only undefiled food or by existing on odors only . . . it becomes possible to attain a state of total communion that can be taken just as easily as a return to the tender familiarity of all creatures of the Golden Age or as a descent into the chaos and confusion of savagery” (298).

³⁴ “Uncanny strangeness” (*étrangeté inquiétante*, the French translation of Freud’s *das Unheimliche*) is one of the many avatars of the archaic Thing (Kristeva *Strangers* 182-92; 214 n. 19).

³⁵ On the defects in Lang's 1881 Teubner edition, which I use for this paper, see Most 214-16. While revising this for publication I became aware that George Boys-Stones is preparing an English translation.

³⁶ "By shifting back and forth from the disowned meaning, still present just the same, of the remnants of antiquity for instance (thus, *Venus* or 'the royal crown') to the *literal* meaning that the Christian spiritualist context attributes to all things, allegory is a tenseness of meanings between their depression/depreciation and their signifying exaltation (*Venus* becomes the allegory of Christian love)" (*Black Sun* 101-2).

³⁷ Reading *monon ton anthrōpon* where Lang prints *monon ton anthrōpōn*.