

THE LOGICAL GAPS IN CONTEMPORARY NEOSTOICISM

Las lagunas lógicas en el neoestoicismo contemporáneo

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Abstract

Over the past two decades, Stoicism has experienced a renewed revival across diverse contexts. Unfortunately, this restoration has distorted it due to narcissistic and capitalist biases. This neo-stoicism has turned stoicism into an instrument for purposes that are far removed from its origins. This is the case of Donald Robertson's therapeutic approach, Ryan Holiday's business approach, and Francisco Vázquez's approach connected to resilience for physical training. It is therefore necessary to expose the shortcomings of these authors and other phenomena associated with this movement. In addition to uncovering the gaps in this neo-Stoicism in relation to logic, one of the three pillars of this philosophy, this article aims to recover the fundamental notions of logic ignored by this new movement. To this end, it uses a methodology of analysis of primary sources and secondary literature in order to restore stoic original foundations and interests. The results and conclusions demonstrate that there is a significant list of elements unknown to the aforementioned neo-Stoicism that must be restored for academic research and social dissemination. It also concludes that the eradication of the fundamental elements of logic in the Stoic reading distorts other Stoic pillars, particularly ethics.

Keywords

Philosophical schools, Knowledge, Education, Ancient era, Philosopher, Philosophy.

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Resumen

Las dos últimas décadas han sido testigos de la enésima recuperación del estoicismo en contextos plurales. Desgraciadamente, esta restauración lo ha deformado debido a sesgos narcisistas y capitalistas. Ítem más, este neoestoicismo ha convertido el estoicismo en un instrumento para fines que son ajenos a sus orígenes como sucede con la terapeutización de Donald Robertson, la introducción en moldes empresariales de Ryan Holiday y el uso para la resiliencia ante el entrenamiento del cuerpo realizado por Francisco Vázquez. Por ello, se hace necesario el desenmascaramiento de las lagunas de estos autores y del resto de fenómenos que se incardinan en este movimiento. Este artículo además de destapar las lagunas de este neoestoicismo en relación con la lógica, uno de los tres pilares de esta filosofía, pretende recuperar las nociones fundamentales de la lógica ignoradas por este nuevo movimiento. Para ello, usa una metodología de análisis de fuentes primarias y literatura secundaria con el fin de restaurar las bases e intereses originales. Los resultados y conclusiones demuestran que existe un listado importante de elementos desconocidos por el citado neoestoicismo que debe ser restaurado para la investigación académica y para su divulgación social. Asimismo, se concluye que la erradicación de los elementos fundamentales de la lógica en la lectura estoica tergiversa otros pilares estoicos, muy particularmente la ética.

Palabras clave

Escuelas filosóficas, conocimiento, educación, edad antigua, filósofo, filosofía.

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Introduction

Toward a Critical Perspective on Neo-Stoicism

The last twenty years have seen the publication of a series of self-help books written by American and British authors, peppered with neo-stoic moral slogans. Likewise, Stoic theory has spread through social media and schools that seek to revive the ideas of Seneca or Marcus Aurelius. Unfortunately, their theories distort the original sources. They transform these philosophers' maxims into narcissistic interpretations and exploit them for purposes unrelated to these philosophical traditions.

The aim of this work is, on the one hand, to unmask these distortions and, on the other, to reveal the gaps in contemporary neo-stoicism. By "gaps," we refer to the shortcomings of the neo-stoic trend in relation to the theory found in the original sources. In this sense, neo-stoicism exhibits philosophical deficiencies stemming from a flawed reading of the sources. Furthermore, this is due to the authors' integration into non-philosophical frameworks such as psychology (as in the case of Donald Robertson), business studies (as seen in Ryan Holiday), or sports science (as in the case of Marcos Vázquez).

Following this line of reasoning, the general hypothesis of this work posits that the most widespread trends in contemporary Stoicism are flawed due to an insufficient study of this school of thought and, fur-

thermore, utilize the ideas of these thinkers in contexts far removed from their roots. Thus, the classical Stoic quest for *logos* does not align with the use of the works of Marcus Aurelius or Epictetus to enhance consumer success, increase resilience in relation to physical training, or reduce anxiety or stress.

The prominence these trends are gaining in contemporary society calls for an academic examination of their tenets to prevent the spread of Stoic interpretations that run counter to the original sources.

The methodology for conducting our study is based on several pillars. First, the tracing of neo-stoicism, linking this task both to the study of bestsellers and the most widely read authors (Robertson, Holiday, Pigliucci, Vázquez) in this field as well as to Stoic sources (works of late Stoicism —Seneca, Epictetus, Musonius Rufus, Marcus Aurelius— and works or fragments of middle and early Stoicism —Zeno, Cleanthes, Chrysippus, Diogenes of Babylon, Posidonius, and Panaetius). In addition, we have drawn upon secondary literature (highlighting classic works such as those by Hadot, Foucault, Pohlenz, Brun, and Elorduy, among others). The analysis of neo-stoicism has required us to examine phenomena in audiovisual culture, such as films and social media, to gain a comprehensive view of Stoicism. This exploration allows us to synthesize the fundamental features of Stoic theory. Furthermore, the investigation helps identify the gaps in Neo-stoicism regarding one of its three pillars: logic, which is the subject of this work. Finally, we conclude with a proposal for steps that anyone trained in Neo-stoicism should take to conduct a study of this school of thought that is more faithful to the sources.

The preceding paragraph serves to explain the structure of the article. It consists of three parts: a study of the dimensions and gaps in Neo-Stoicism, an analysis of the elements of Stoicism overlooked by Neo-Stoicism, and proposals for how Neo-Stoicism can improve its approach to Stoic philosophy.

Neo-Stoicism

As noted above, Neo-Stoicism is a multifaceted phenomenon. In addition to written works, it includes social media profiles, courses offered by organizations, and even movies and TV series. This section examines this phenomenon and, in its second subsection, summarizes the characterization of Stoicism presented by its proponents.



Neo-Stoicism in “Best-Sellers”

Donald Robertson (2013), an English psychologist, discovered two decades ago that Stoicism offered a set of tools useful for his work as a therapist and for cultivating “calm and self-control in the face of life’s difficulties” (p. 11). These connections between Stoicism and cognitive-behavioral therapy grew ever closer, leading him to publish several studies (Robertson, 2000, 2013, 2016, 2019, and 2020; Robertson and Codd, 2019), most notably *Stoicism and the Art of Happiness: Practical Wisdom for Everyday Life* (2013) and *Think Like a Roman Emperor* (2020). It should be noted that he also conducted studies on mental illness from a philosophical perspective (Raabe, 2010). In parallel with these endeavors, he launched the “Stoic Mindfulness and Resilience Training” course in 2014, which views the teachings of Marcus Aurelius and Seneca as a tool for building resilience.¹ He later achieved success with his “Stoic Week,” which has now reached more than forty thousand people.²

Although the American Ryan Holiday took courses in political science and creative writing in college, he never graduated. Despite this, he knew how to capitalize on the marketing classes he took to devise a clever ploy that made him famous: he appeared on television shows using fake profiles to complain about various companies. These strategies laid the groundwork for him to become the CMO of American Apparel and to write books such as *Trust Me, I’m Lying: Confessions of a Media Manipulator* (2013). However, for nearly a decade, his main source of income has been teaching courses and writing books on Stoicism (Holiday, 2014, 2016, 2021, and 2023; Holiday and Hanselman, 2014 and 2020).

Marcos Vázquez, a university-trained engineer certified in nutrition and fitness, is the author of another neo-stoic bestseller: *Undefeated: Achieve More, Suffer Less* (Vázquez, 2021). He had a sickly childhood due to physical problems such as asthma and allergies. As a teenager, he joined a gym in hopes of strengthening his physique and overcoming his limitations; however, the results were meager, so he created his own methodology: “revolutionary fitness.” His program integrates several pillars: nutritional recommendations, strength-building exercises, and philosophical activities designed to enhance mental clarity and decision-making through critical thinking. This last aspect is cultivated through meditation exercises and Stoic philosophy. This is where his book *Invicto* comes into play. Unlike the authors mentioned earlier, Vázquez has written only this one book on Stoicism, devoting the rest of his publications to nutrition or fitness.



Massimo Pigliucci, a professor at City College of New York, continues the tradition of neo-stoic bestsellers with *How to Be a Stoic* (2018), *The Forging of Character* (2023), and *My Stoic Notebook* (Pigliucci and López, 2019). Although the first text presents a form of Stoicism aligned with the ideas of classical thinkers, the volume co-authored with López veers off course by mixing the intentions of Seneca or Epictetus with psychological ideologies, endowing this philosophical tradition with an instrumental pragmatism foreign to the primary sources.

These authors have promoted neo-stoic courses, conferences, and institutions that share the philosophy's instrumental spirit. The program with the highest number of participants is the aforementioned Stoic Week, created in 2012 as a study group for students at the University of Exeter. Its success was stratospheric: during the first week, more than 150 people signed up, and, as noted, it has now reached more than 40,000 people. This group trains its participants over seven days through philosophical exercises and three daily meditations linked to five pillars (Modern Stoicism Team, 2020):

- Happiness
- The four Stoic virtues: wisdom, courage, justice, and moderation
- Individual ethical development
- Emotions
- Contemplation of Nature

Building on this success, Stoa centers have opened their doors in various countries, offering similar educational programs (Pohlenz, 2022). Such is the case with the Stoa in Madrid, founded by a foreign economist enamored with Roman Stoicism, which offers courses and seminars organized into three programs: a philosophical gym, a “mentoring” program that—inspired by Robertson—combines Stoicism and “rational emotive behavior therapy,” and an assessment of progress through individualized monitoring.

Neo-stoicism has also proliferated on social media. There are dozens of Stoicism groups on Facebook that bring together thousands of followers, such as “Estoicos-estoicismo” (424,000 members), “Estoicismo/ estoicos Bogotá Colombia. Path to Holistic Development” (334,000 members), “Stoic Journal” (73,000 members), “Stoicism for Beginners” (11,000 members), “Stoicism” (3,700 members), “Stoicism in Spanish” (8,000 members), “Practical Stoicism: Journals, Meditations, and Reflections” (6,400 members), and “Stoicism. Colombia” (5,200 members). It should be noted that membership numbers are constantly increasing, and the figures presented here are as of August 20, 2023. Furthermore, this num-



ber is higher when groups on other platforms such as Telegram or TikTok are taken into account. Finally, we must include TikTokers and influencers who have used Stoic slogans to achieve success—as defined within the ideological framework of capitalist society.

Added to this social media explosion is Hollywood's commodification of the Stoic spirit through characters who display a theatrical control over their emotions. The stern, furrowed-browed gazes of gunfighters in Western films set an important precedent. Recent years have seen franchises like *Star Trek* (remember Mr. Spock) and *Star Wars* continue to rake in dollars and euros by leveraging the Stoic emotional profile. The Jedi's mastery of the Force (and their passions) is a prime example (even though George Lucas has indicated that his source of inspiration is more Eastern in origin—i.e., derived from bushido and Buddhism). The Jedi have been joined by new faces and new galactic tribes. The latest has been the series about the Mandalorians (*The Mandalorian*, *The Book of Boba Fett*), who reaffirmed their loyalty to a rationalist creed of honor ("This is the way") that echoes Stoicism. In fact, Mandalorians and Jedi have ultimately merged in television productions such as the recent *Ahsoka*.

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Basic Characteristics of Neo-Stoicism

Neo-Stoic authors share the following common traits

- Lack of familiarity with (or significant gaps in knowledge regarding) primary sources. Although they often cite Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, and Seneca (frequently using somewhat careless translations), it is less common to find ideas from Cicero or Chrysippus in their writings. Even more serious is the complete absence of citations from Zeno, Cleanthes, Diogenes of Babylon, Panaetius, Posidonius, or Musonius Rufus. Furthermore, there are no references to academic secondary literature; i.e., there are no references to the studies by Barth (1930), Pohlenz (2022), Brun (1977), or Elorduy (1972a and b), with the sole exception of Pierre Hadot (2006). This omission obscures contentious aspects of Stoicism that conflict with contemporary values, such as the defense of slavery (Seneca, 1986, pp. 55–56) or of divination (Cicero, 1988).
- The authors come from professions and fields of knowledge outside of philosophy, such as psychology, business and marketing, or physical education and nutrition. The only exception

is Pigliucci, although his most recent works have been carried out in collaboration with López, a psychologist by profession.

- Instrumentalization of Stoicism. As a result, Stoicism is treated as a tool for purposes unrelated to philosophy. The objectives of their work are therapeutic in nature (Robertson, 2000, 2013, 2016, and 2019; Robertson and Codd, 2019; Brown et al., 2022; MacLellan and Derakhshan, 2021; Ohayon and Flanagan, 2019; Gill, 2016), seek physical improvements (Vázquez, 2021), or succumb to normalized capitalist productivism (Holiday and Hanselman, 2020) —all of which are far removed from the goals of a philosophical education (Silva Carreño et al., 2023, pp. 183-205). This is driven by the fact that the cited authors understand and explain Stoicism from within the extra-philosophical ideological frameworks in which they were trained.
- Individualism. Since narcissism is one of the dominant characteristics of the Western social system, these authors fail to separate it from the objectives of their proposals (Holiday and Hanselman, 2020, p. 119), prioritizing it over the original cosmopolitan and political character of classical Stoicism (Marcus Aurelius, 2005, pp. 123, 139–140, 199).
- Lack of critique regarding capitalist social excesses. The previous point is reinforced by a lack of critical and analytical tools among these authors to challenge the ideologies and sensibilities of the economic system.
- A focus on morality and a neglect or ignorance of Stoic physics and logic (Vázquez, 2021; Robertson, 2020; Holiday and Hanselman, 2020).

This study will focus on the last point and leave the remaining topics for future research. Thus, the objective is twofold. The first is to expose the shortcomings of neo-stoicism regarding logic. This negative goal is complemented by a second, positive one: to identify and clarify the elements of logic that complete the theories of the new Stoics.

The Dominance of Morality in Neo-Stoicism

One of the main errors of neo-stoicism is to characterize the Stoic movement exclusively from a moral perspective. This section examines this deviation and lays the groundwork for a critique in the following section.



The latter will focus on the logical dimensions and demonstrate why neo-stoicism's excessive moralizing is fundamentally flawed.

Morality as a “Leitmotif” in Neo-Stoicism

Social media platforms portray Stoicism as an exclusively ethical-moral movement. The Facebook group “Estoicismope” (see <https://bit.ly/4eeTjX7>) describes its teachings as “an individual’s ability or willpower to control their feelings and emotions.” Similarly, “Stoic” censors “opinions or articles [...] that do not contain a Stoic commentary, moral lesson, or teaching.” The group “Estoicismo” (see <https://bit.ly/4fQIpIf>) is aimed at “all those who share the Stoic philosophy (especially Stoic morality or ethics).” The slogans shared within these groups—often presented as if they were academic citations—rely on a simplistic moralizing with little documentary basis and never include logical maxims, save for a reference to acting in accordance with reason that is so extremely generic it could justify any kind of behavior.

These tendencies are consistent with the work of Holiday and Hanselman (2020), who state that the goal of Stoicism is to “help you live a better life” (p. 15). This approach uncritically accepts the normative frameworks of capitalist society, lacking the logical tools to question its ends or to recognize how one’s ideology and sensibilities are being shaped. Thus, when they ask, “What would you rather do: risk drowning by crossing a dangerous stretch in a few weeks, or cross now while it is easy?” (p. 184), death is acknowledged as an evil to be avoided and life as an indisputable good. This directly conflicts with the Stoic defense of suicide—namely, the view that one should live only when existence remains dignified. Following Holiday’s line of questioning, it is hard to imagine that Marcus Aurelius would have accepted the rule of Rome or that Seneca would have undertaken the education of Nero.

The pragmatism of this question raises further queries, such as: Does this not advocate a hedonistic and pragmatic tendency that conflicts with the fundamentally adversarial and gladiatorial nature of classical Stoicism?

Holiday and Hanselman’s normative blindness becomes painfully evident when they argue that success is the result of individual, capitalist, and productivist achievements—implying that Stoicism can help us achieve a happiness that depends on the American social model (p. 185). This individualistic drift of neo-stoicism reappears in Vázquez’s *Invicto* (2021), which implicitly echoes the mantra “if you want it, you can do it.”



These authors overlook the critiques that Sandel (2020) and Horkheimer (2000) have leveled regarding the profound influence of structural factors on success, which extend far beyond individual will.

An additional problem is that neo-stoic happiness stands in direct opposition to a happiness dependent entirely on virtue, as advocated by Seneca (2001, pp. 56–57), among others.

Pigliucci and López (2019), like their colleagues, adopt a reductionist moral Stoicism. They state that “the great lesson of the ancient philosophy of Stoicism” is “to shape one’s character” (p. 8). Although they maintain that “to decide what the best way of life (ethics) is, one must understand how the world works (physics) and reason properly about it (logic)” (p. 10), exercises in logic —except for a simplistic view of *dieresis*— are conspicuous by their absence.

Continuing with this misrepresentation, the purpose of the Stoa of Madrid lies in cultivating “virtues, as the foundation for achieving a happy life.” Its educational programs ignore dianoetic virtues, which are the pillars for constructing sound discourse or argumentation, as well as the challenges of *synkatathesis* (assent) and the mechanisms for generating dialectical thought. This educational plan is consistent with the content of the British Stoic Week, from which it draws inspiration and whose daily pillars are structured as follows (Robertson, 2016):

- Monday: Life as a project and role models.
- Tuesday: Determining what is within one’s own control.
- Wednesday: Stoic mindfulness and examining one’s impressions.
- Thursday: Virtue.
- Friday: Relationships with others and society.
- Saturday: Resilience and preparedness for adversity.
- Sunday: Nature and a cosmic perspective.

Although one might concede that examining impressions could offer some insight into logic, the program provides neither the epistemological criteria for distinguishing between valid and invalid opinions nor the tools for a dialectical clarification of the truth contained in arguments.

Neo-Stoic Justifications for Moral Imperialism

Donald Robertson (2016) justified his interest in ethics over logic and physics with five arguments:



- More Stoic texts on ethics have been preserved than on logic and physics.
- Interest in ethics outweighs that in the other two fields due to its connection to psychotherapy and self-help, and the prevalence of these fields today.
- Some Stoics, such as Ariston, centered their entire philosophy on ethics.
- The Stoics placed greater emphasis on ethical character than on logic and physics.
- All Stoics argued that the primary field of philosophy is ethics.

These reasons are evidence of the fragile intellectual foundations of Neo-stoicism, as we demonstrate with the following objections:

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- First, there are more texts whose central theme appears to be ethics only in the case of the Roman Stoics, since metaphysical and logical considerations are more abundant in the fragments and writings of Middle and Early Stoicism (Zeno et al., 2002). Furthermore, the works of Marcus Aurelius (2005), Epictetus (2004), and Seneca (2001) are permeated by logical insights—such as the epistemological theory of *katalepsis*—or by studies in physics, to the extent that there are even books dedicated to these topics, such as Seneca’s *Natural Questions* (2016). This is consistent with the triad formed by logic, physics, and ethics, which does not allow one to conceptualize one without the other two, as we will see later. Therefore, the alleged Stoic neglect of physics and logic stems from the author’s inability to detect the seeds of these two fields in ethical texts or from the weakness of his interpretations. These difficulties are consistent with Robertson’s (2020) social perspective, which is steeped in ethical questions, detached from (meta)physics and logic, and thus limited in its ability to distinguish the ontological and logical foundations of reality.
- Second, the Stoic with the most published works was Chrysippus. This thinker specialized in logic, as evidenced by the titles contained in the lists we have preserved and the fragments that address issues of rhetoric, oratory, and dialectic.
- Third, although philosophy can be understood as an ethical way of life (Tukiainen, 2012), the most widespread and original Stoic field in academic philosophy during the Middle Ages and the modern era was not Stoic ethics—which draws inspiration from

(and sometimes copies) much of the philosophical tradition of Plato and Aristotle—but rather logic. The Stoics created and developed a form of logic (propositional logic) that rivaled the other major school of logic of that era: Aristotle’s predicate logic.

- Fourth, focusing on ethics simply because it is the field most closely related to contemporary society is no reason to accept it as the sole Stoic truth and to ignore the rest. In fact, focusing exclusively on ethics and avoiding an analysis of Stoic logic and (meta)physics underscores an ideological and uncritical dependence on social norms. Moreover, it would be more useful to offer readers content that guides them into less-explored fields rather than the well-trodden paths of ethics.

- Fifth, citing Ariston as an example in Stoicism highlights the author’s ignorance or, even worse, his deliberate manipulation. Robertson is correct in pointing out Ariston’s disaffection with logic; in fact, this thinker compared dialectics to “a plate of crabs: lots of shell and little meat” (Elorduy, 1972b, p. 32), and Hadot (2013) paraphrased his views in the following terms:

The arguments of dialecticians are like spider webs: useless, yet ingenious. Those who delve into dialectics resemble those who eat shrimp: they work hard to obtain nothing more than a meager meal. Dialectics is like the mud on the roads: useless, it causes those who walk on it to fall (pp. 54–55). However, Robertson ignores (or conceals) the fact that Ariston was a heterodox figure within the Stoa who attempted to establish an independent school that eventually disappeared. Furthermore, he was supplanted by Chrysippus, who reestablished the school. Ariston’s work is marginal, and only a few authors seem to have drawn fleeting and sporadic inspiration from him—for example, when Seneca criticizes the excesses of the *cavillatores*’ logic.⁴ It would have been more fruitful for Robertson’s argument to have cited Seneca’s views against Chrysippus or to have argued that Marcus Aurelius ultimately rejected Fronto, his teacher of rhetoric, on the grounds that Fronto used philosophy to polish his arguments and win public applause rather than to seek the practical application of philosophy.

Sixth, emphasizing that the Stoics prioritized training in ethical dimensions again points to a misunderstanding of Stoicism, since, as we have described in a previous article (Barrientos, 2025), the philosophical life advocated by our thinkers results



from an ontological or (meta)physical transformation of a logical nature rather than from blind adherence to moral principles disconnected from the school's other two pillars. Thus, without the subsumption of the person into the *logos*, there is no Stoic, no matter how thoroughly one has memorized the philosophical creed and applied it to one's life. The metaphysical goal of Zeno or Marcus Aurelius (2005, p. 138) was the acquisition of a nature aligned with the *logos*, and one of the results would be ethical behavior.

Finally, not all Stoics focused on morality as the central axis of their philosophy. The logical commitments of Chrysippus have been noted, and one should add Zeno's metaphysical lineage, Posidonius's interest in physics—which encompassed scientific studies of the stars and natural phenomena—the search for metaphysical foundations in Seneca's *Natural Questions* (2016), the approaches to dialectics in Epictetus's *Enchiridion* (2004), and the reflections on *physis* and the cosmic vision in the final books of Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations* (2005, p. 138), among others.

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The Rediscovery of Logos in Neo-Stoicism

This fourth section focuses on the gaps in Neo-stoicism. It lists and briefly explains a set of elements overlooked by Neo-stoicism. In doing so, it explains the distortion of the contemporary reception of classical Stoicism.

The Stoic Trinity

There exists a triumvirate—a bond of kinship—within the Stoa between *logos*, *physis*, and *ethos*. This is explained through various metaphors. According to Posidonius, Stoicism resembles an egg whose shell is identified with logic, the white with morality, and the yolk with physics (Barth, 1930, p. 36). Diogenes Laertius (cited in Elorduy, 1972b, p. 331) likens our philosophical school to an animal, equating its bones and nerves with logic, its flesh with morality, and its soul with physics. Finally, Zeno likens philosophy to a fertile field whose fence stands tall like logic, whose earth and trees rise like physics, and whose fruit bursts open, juicy, like morality.

The central element of these trinarities lies in the need to understand their three components as three instances that are simultaneously distinguishable yet blend their essences, as we will explain below. In fact, recent conceptions, such as Connelly's, propose linking logic with phys-

ics. Connelly (2024, pp. 180–210) points out that truth derives its existence from position and change in the world.

The first metaphor suggests that, without the protective function of logic (the shell), morality cannot survive. Activities of logic, such as *dieresis*—which reflects on what is within our power to change (Epictetus, 2004, pp. 3–11)—guide us toward action that accepts the unchangeable and strives to introduce rationality into the dilemmas we face, enabling us to make decisions that produce an appropriate ethic. On the other hand, morality (the white) is the nourishment of the physical (the yolk): without the former, material life lacks meaning and self-destructs.

The second metaphor introduces a logic (bones and tendons) that serves as the foundation of morality. However, these two elements turn into dead matter without the vitalizing force of *physis*, the breath of life from which existence is “recreated.”

The third analogy repeats the image of logic as the rational protector (fence) of morality. Physics appears as the life-giving principle or visible body of existence. Morality will bear fruit from these two principles.

These trinitarian explanations can be reversed and extended, for example, from logic (dialectic or science) to the moral dimensions, justifying that ethical goodness is the result of rational practice:

Dialectic is a virtue that, in its own right, encompasses various virtues such as: the virtue of not stumbling (*aproptosis*), serenity in the face of appearances, firmness in defense, imperturbability in the face of fantasy, confidence in understanding, and the ability to discern the true from the false. It is therefore necessary and constitutes a virtue that encompasses other virtues (Elorduy, 1972a, p. 303).

Elorduy explains here how the dianoetic virtue of dialectic nourishes and strengthens moral virtues such as serenity, firmness, and confidence. Brun (1977) agrees with this point in his analysis and emphasizes that dialectic contains other dianoetic virtues that help us make better decisions or see reality more deeply:

Dialectic [...] is a virtue that contains within itself the other virtues: circumspection, which tells us when it is appropriate to approve and when it is not; sagacity, which is the ability to counter what is merely plausible with arguments, so as not to yield to it; rigor, the strength of reasoning that prevents us from being overcome by opposing rigor; and gravity, the ability to relate representations through sound reasoning (p. 54).

On the other hand, physics becomes a principle of ethical wisdom in Posidonius; thus, the scientist serves as the model of the wise man in



his texts (Elorduy, 1972b, p. 158; Pohlenz, 2022, p. 268). Likewise, Seneca asserted that the sciences prepare the soul to receive virtue (Elorduy, 1972b, p. 257).

Ontological Nature of the “Logos”

Long and Sedley state that the fields of application of Stoic logic are “rhetoric, grammar (for some, linguistics), poetics, philosophical semantics, and formal logic, in addition to issues typically classified as ‘theory of knowledge’” (Long and Sedley cited in Crisipo, 2006a, p. 56). Moving forward, we will use this taxonomy to highlight the elements overlooked by Neo-stoicism.

First, it is necessary to analyze the ontological dimensions of the *logos*, the word. Zeno’s religious and Eastern influences mean that his conception of the *logos* is equated with the Semitic *dabar*. The *dabar* is not merely a means of transmitting information but an active, operative principle in reality (Elorduy, 1972a, p. 9). The Hebrew word of God (*dabar*) creates and transforms realities, possessing true ontological weight. For this reason, certain names must not be spoken (nor taken in vain): uttering them facilitates taking possession of them or transforms what already exists.

This idea dates back to a conception from the third millennium B.C., in which the voice of the god acts as a distinct entity with power of its own. Sumerian and Canaanite texts show that the divine voice or commands were concretely represented by the roar of thunder. Later, in Egyptian, cuneiform, and biblical literature, we find many passages in which the divine command—and the word from his mouth—were virtually hypostatized (Elorduy, 1972a, p. 40).

In this text, Elorduy offers an ontological dimension of the word with transformative implications. The word not only serves to convey information but, as in magical incantations or prayers, actively operates upon entities. The author goes on to provide examples drawn from the Old Testament. This is the part of the Bible of Semitic origin that provides the foundation for the ontologization of the word, a point that will be confirmed later:

We read in Deutero-Isaiah 40:8: “The word of God will endure forever.” In the Wisdom of Solomon, written at least four centuries later, we find the remarkable passage (18:15): “Your almighty word (*logos*) was hurled down from heaven, from your royal throne, like an invincible warrior in the midst of a land destined for ruin, carrying your irrevocable decree



as a sharp sword.” As Durr demonstrated with great erudition, this idea is Semitic, not Hellenic (Elorduy, 1972a, p. 40).

The word in Hebrew (and in Kabbalah) possesses ontological potential, as is the case in incantations or magical spells.⁵ It is no coincidence that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, for in Hebrew, *bet-lehem* means “house of bread,” Christ being the bread that will be offered in the Eucharist for salvation. Jerusalem, the city into which Christ would enter victoriously, derives from *ir-shalom*, i.e., “city of peace” (Mt 21:1–11; Mk 11:1–10; Lk 19:28–40; Jn 12:12–19). Thus, the Jewish reader understands (and hears) that Jesus is entering the city where peace with God would be restored thanks to his sacrifice on Golgotha. Finally, the Catholic Eucharist does not use the word merely to recall the past but to summon into the present the salvific act that transcends time. From this conception of the word, the Bible is not merely read but is proclaimed, bringing realities into being.

These ontological and (meta)physical pillars of the word are reiterated in the Stoic concept of the *logos*. Consequently, the study of logic is identified with that of *physis*, since the rational order of the *logos* corresponds to that of the world. In this sense, Zeno’s interest in the study of etymology was based on the fact that it allowed for a deeper exploration of the very core of reality (Elorduy, 1972a, p. 261; Pohlenz, 2022, p. 60). His interest in onomatopoeia is profound (Pohlenz, 2022, p. 59) because these were the words that most closely aligned signifier and meaning.

When Zeno assigns names to various entities (Zeno et al., 2002, p. 46), he functions as a creator, for without names, realities do not exist. Likewise, when Chrysippus studies the laws of logic, he feels immersed in a study of the physical laws of nature, which is consistent with the Stoic trinity that unites logic and physics. A single *logos* governs *logos*, *physis*, and *ethos*.

When Neo-Stoicism neglects logic, it not only loses one of the three aforementioned pillars but also distorts the other two: acting appropriately (*ethos*) requires a sound structure of thought (*logos*), since thought is the first act of creating realities (*physis*).

Beginning with the ruins of neo-Stoic logic: representation

Neo-stoicism is not entirely foreign to the logic of our thinkers. However, its analyses and the content of the concepts it presents are meager. Therefore, a return to its foundations is required.

We cannot overlook a concept that Neo-Stoicism frequently invokes: opinion or representation. Vázquez (2021) and Holiday and Han-



selman (2020) remind us that a good life requires that we not be led astray by erroneous interpretations (opinions) of reality, but rather by those mediated by reason. However, their texts neither define what an “opinion” is nor explain the basis for an erroneous one or how to correct it.

Beginning with the first topic, Plutarch defines representation as an “affection within the soul” (Brun, 1977, p. 45), and Brun summarizes that, for Stoicism, opinion coincides with “a modification of the soul’s inner tension by an external object that also possesses its own tension” (p. 49). Cleanthes, recalling the materialism of the Stoa, points out that representation has depressions and reliefs (Brun, 1977). The representation leaves its mark on the soul because it determines passion, as Epictetus’s maxim (1993) states: “Neither death, nor exile, nor suffering, nor any of these things are the reason we do or do not do something; rather, it is our assumptions and opinions” (p. 94). Along these lines, the text by Epictetus (2004) adds:

Remember that it is not the one who insults or strikes who offends, but the opinion that judges these actions as offensive. Therefore, when someone irritates you, be aware that it is your judgment that has irritated you (p. 41).

The Stoics distinguish between comprehensive (or kataleptic) fantasies and phantasmagorical or fantastical ones. The former stem from the proper use of reason or a detachment from the passions; the latter do not correspond to reality. An example of the latter occurs in the images that appear in dreams or when one loses one’s judgment (Chrysippus, 2006a, pp. 14–15, 472). The most prolific author of Stoicism adds important clarifications to this dichotomy between true opinions (*phantasia* and *phantaston*) and false ones (*phantastikon* and *phantasma*). Let us begin with *phantasia*:

Representation (*phantasia*) is a state that occurs in the soul, revealing within itself that which has produced it, just as when we see with our eyes that which is white: it is a state that takes place through vision in the soul, and in accordance with this state we can say that there is something white that moves us (the same applies to touch and smell). It is called representation (*phantasia*) because of light (*phos*), for just as light reveals itself and what it encompasses, so too does representation reveal itself and what has produced it (Chrysippus, 2006a, p. 14).

Opposite representation lies the represented, or *phantaston*:

The represented (*phantaston*) is that which produces representation—such as that which is white and that which is cold—and thus every-



thing capable of moving the soul. This is the represented. Imagination (*phantastikon*) is a vain attraction, an affect in the soul that does not stem from any represented thing, like one who wrestles with shadows or stretches out his hands into the void; for representation is underpinned by a represented thing, but imagination is not (p. 14).

Finally, we must distinguish the imagined (*phantasma*):

The imagined (*phantasma*) is that to which we are drawn by a vain, imaginary attraction. It happens to those who suffer a fit of melancholy or madness. For example, Orestes in the tragedy when he says: “Oh, mother, I beg you, do not drive me those serpentine joys with blood-stained feet! There, there they are, already leaping beside me!” He says this as if he were mad, yet he is not seeing anything; it merely seems that way to him (p. 15).

As mentioned earlier, the first criterion for distinguishing an appropriate or kataleptic representation is the preservation of rational sanity. Reflecting on Seneca’s concept of anger, he pondered how this passion led to erroneous judgments to the point of provoking irrational acts.

The maintenance of sanity is possible thanks to the rational *tonos*. This is the tension that holds the entire universe together and keeps it rationally ordered, just as physical toning keeps the body healthy, strong, and orderly. The *tonos* prevents the subject’s degradation into behaviors weakened by passion. The toning of the *logos* requires training on the part of the subject.

When the *logos*, out of weakness, assents to a representation that does not possess the characteristics necessary for the apprehension of the object, we are faced with a *doxa*—a weak, pathogenic *synkatathesis*—the source of all errors and incorrect actions. Assent to the kataleptic representation—*katalepsis*—is, on the contrary, the foundation of all knowledge (Pohlenz, 2022, p. 84).

Training consists of all the logical, dialectical, rhetorical, and grammatical exercises taught at the Stoa. This philosophical discipline makes it easier to live in accordance with kataleptic representations, which we summarize, following Zeno, in four characteristics (Pohlenz, 2022, p. 81):

- It must originate from a real object and not from a mirage or a dream.
- It must show the subject the object as it truly is.
- It must reproduce every element of the object or event.



- It must prevent the presence of confusing or erroneous representations, such as those arising from a dream or psychosis.

Stoic Logic

The skeletal logic, rhetoric, and dialectic of Neo-Stoicism are limited to a summary view of *dieresis*—which distinguishes what is within our power to change—and to a superficial explanation of correct representations. Below, we revisit other basic elements of the Stoa.

Stoic propositional logic contrasts with (and complements) Aristotelian predicate logic. The latter attributes essential and abstract predicates to a subject, as in “human beings are mortal.” Chrysippus’s logic, conversely, establishes inferential and temporal implications, as in “if it rains today, I will not go out. Since it is raining, I have not gone out” (Brun, 1977, pp. 39–40). Pohlenz uses the label “transcendental” for predicate logic (Pohlenz, 2022, p. 70) since it involves essences—i.e., it indicates the nature of beings. Stoic logic, by contrast, is linked to immanence and everyday events, connecting causes directly to their consequences.

The study of propositions is based on an in-depth examination of “syntactic relations” that give rise to “the theory of judgment, logical inference, and demonstration” (p. 65). These tools possess immense practical application potential in the contexts in which Vázquez, Robertson, and Holiday operate. Specifically, a good philosopher should practice the Stoic distinction between conclusive and non-conclusive reasoning. The former consists of conclusions that follow necessarily from the premises, whereas the latter do not, since “the opposite of the final proposition is not contrary to the premises” (Brun, 1977, p. 56); i.e., non-conclusive arguments may be necessary but are not sufficient. One cannot infer the conclusion “having COVID” from the premise “having a fever,” but one could safely draw that conclusion if the premise were a positive test for the disease.

A second key framework for Stoic reasoning is hypothetical reasoning (Barth, 1930, p. 112). This corresponds to a conditional inference based on external “signs”—for example, “it is light, therefore, it is daytime” (p. 112).

Third, Chrysippus argued that the purpose of syllogistics “consisted in establishing the figures (*tropoi*) that make a correct conclusion possible.” He described five *tropoi* that provide essential material for completing neo-Stoic training:



1. If A, then B. A. Therefore, B.
2. If A, then B. Not B. Therefore, not A.
3. Not both A and B. A. Therefore, not B.
4. Either A or B. A. Therefore, not B.
5. Either A or B. Not B. Therefore, A (Pohlenz, 2022, p. 70).

The above schemas are referred to by Chrysippus as the “undemonstrables.” There were five of them (Mates, 1985, pp. 117-128; Bobzien, 2003, pp. 104-105; López Astorga, 2022, pp. 28-29):

The first undemonstrable proposition is one in which an entire argument is constructed from a conditional proposition, the antecedent that begins the conditional, and the consequent; for example, “If the first, then the second; the first; therefore, the second.” The second undemonstrable argument is one that results from a conditional proposition and the contradictory of its consequent, and whose conclusion is the contradictory of the antecedent; for example, “If it is day, there is light; it is night, therefore it is not day” (Chrysippus, 2006b, p. 39).



Following this, the first undemonstrable proposition is the classic form of argumentation linked to the classical *modus ponens*: if p , then q ; p , therefore q . An excellent translation of classical Stoic logic into modern logic along these lines is provided by Mario Piazza and Marcello D’Agostino (2022, pp. 83–99) and by Crivelli (2025, pp. 343–375).

The second presents an argument that is slightly more complex. It includes a conditional (if it is daytime, there is light) and the negation of the consequent (it is night), which leads to the conclusion that the opposite of the antecedent is true (it is not day).

The third undemonstrable argument is one that results from a negative conjunction and one of the propositions within the conjunction, concluding with the contradictory of the other; for example, “It is not true (at the same time) that Plato is dead and that Plato is alive; Plato is dead, therefore Plato is not alive.” The fourth undemonstrable syllogism is one that results from a disjunction and one of the component propositions, and whose conclusion is the contradictory of the remaining proposition, such as “Either the first or the second; the first; therefore, not the second” (Chrysippus, 2006b, pp. 39–40).

As can be seen, the third undemonstrable proposition involves combining two contradictory propositions: A and not A—that Plato is both alive and dead at the same time. Added to this is the premise affirming one of them (Plato is dead), which leads to the negation of the other

(Plato is not alive). This line of reasoning forms part of Marcin Tkaczyk's (2024, pp. 325–345) recent theory on the “principle of explosion” in Stoic logic, which states that if both *P* and *not-P* are accepted, any conclusion becomes formally valid.

The fourth undemonstrable statement is based on the analysis of exclusive disjunction and the impossibility of both parts being true simultaneously. Thus, if one part is affirmed, it follows that the other is false. The fifth undemonstrable statement functions conversely: if one part is denied, it follows that the other must be true.

The fifth undemonstrable proposition is one in which an argument is constructed from a disjunction and the contradictory of one of the members of that disjunction, concluding that the other must be true; for example, “Either it is day or it is night; it is not night, therefore it is day” (Chrysippus, 2006b, p. 40).

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Stoic logic is not a transcendental study disconnected from facts and events. Hypothetical and inferential judgments are firmly grounded in empirical evidence (Pohlenz, 2022, pp. 68–69). These led to the defense of science by Posidonius and Herillus, who regarded it as the “supreme good” and as something “which must be sought for its own sake” (Zeno et al., 2002, p. 225).

Finally, Stoicism studied the fallacies of its predecessors, went on to identify new ones—such as the fallacy of the consequent—and questioned others, such as the lazy argument. In this regard, it is important to recall ancient Stoicism's intense interest in exposing the structural errors of sophisms (Barth, 1930, pp. 114, 116).

Here is a brief list of tools that can be actively applied in exercises on Neo-Stoicism. Keep in mind that these tools are not only useful for constructing and analyzing arguments and discourses; rather, the ontological character of logic and the logical nature of ethics help us understand the very essence of Stoic (meta)physics and morality. Their contemporary invisibility destroys the unity of the Stoic trinity, decontextualizes moral maxims, and reduces logic to academic games with no grounding in reality—an outcome that stands in direct opposition to the original intentions of the Stoa.

Oratory

Oratory is fundamental to the Stoa: Zeno, Cleanthes, and Chrysippus wrote manuals on it, and this interest is evident in the written and oral discourses of Seneca, Cicero, and Marcus Aurelius. Their texts follow

strict rhetorical rules consistent with the structure of the *logos*. This alone would be sufficient to criticize the lack of practice in rhetoric and oratory in Neo-stoic works.⁶ Listed below are some topics for training in this field.

Oratory involved correct expression in both everyday language and liturgical speech, in both its semantic and syntactic dimensions. Chrysippus (2006b) notes that the practice of oratory enhances the *logos* and fosters ethical virtues linked to speaking rightly; furthermore, good moral character is required to deliver an appropriate speech: “one who is not good cannot speak well” (p. 51). In fact, he identified five virtues in an excellent speech: Hellenism, clarity, brevity, decency, and fairness (Elorduy, 1972a, p. 305). Theophrastus identifies three such virtues, which are in line with Zeno’s ideas:

Clarity (*safeneia*), appropriate expression (*prepon*), and *kataskein*—i.e., artistic composition through carefully chosen speech that avoids anything vulgar. They went beyond Theophrastus only by including a fifth virtue: brevity (*sintonia*). Zeno detested superfluous words and empty chatter (Pohlenz, 2022, p. 72).

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The fundamental vice is the solecism, which the ancient Stoics describe as “speaking incorrectly” (Zeno et al., 2002, p. 56). Today, a solecism consists of the incorrect placement of a preposition in a sentence, the improper conjugation of a verb, or an inaccurate agreement between terms.

Due to the connection between *logos* and *physis*, solecisms also occur in everyday contexts, according to Zeno et al. (2002):

A solecism is committed not only through ignorance of language and speech, but also in matters of dress—when one dresses in a coarse manner, eats without restraint, or walks awkwardly—as Zeno of Citium states (p. 69).

This idea is echoed by Chrysippus (2006a) in relation to modesty in speech and actions:

I believe that one must not only cultivate a liberal and simple style, [but also], in speech, appropriate conduct regarding the proper tone of voice and the gestures of the face and hands (pp. 218–219).

If we focus on the composition of speech, Chrysippus identifies four parts (Pohlenz, 2022, p. 72):

- Prologue or introduction to the speech.
- Diegesis, or the narration or description of the event in the most objective and kataleptic manner.

- Refutation of the opponent through arguments.
- Epilogue, which summarizes, synthesizes, or brings closure to what has been explained.

There are various types of propositions: exhortation, oath, petition (desire), hypothesis, and apostrophe, among others. Among these, the axiom or judicative proposition is of particular interest to philosophy, since it “formulates the mental fixation of a fact with a claim to objective validity” (Pohlenz, 2022, p. 66). Furthermore, there are six types of (judicative) propositions: the conditional, the consecutive, the coordinated, the disjunctive, the causal, and the comparative.

This theoretical material would serve to help Neo-Stoics not only deepen their skills in sharpening their discourse and arguments but also refine their modes of expression related to their manner of dress and, in general, their way of being.

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Philosophy of Language and Grammar

Epictetus maintained that “the examination of words” should become the foundation of philosophical teachings (Epictetus, 1993, p. 108), since *logos* influences the other two fields of the Stoic triad. In fact, the Stoic Lucius Aelius Stilo, teacher of Cicero and Varro, is considered the founder of linguistics and the first philologist.

The Stoics’ discoveries in this field predate Stilo. The following are particularly noteworthy (Barth, 1930, pp. 139–141; Pohlenz, 2022, pp. 63–65):

- The article, which originally covered the pronoun and the adverb (coined by the Stoic Antipater of Tarsus).
- The inflection of nouns and verbs, and the cases of the nominative, genitive, and accusative.
- Verb tenses, including the present, the pluperfect, and indefinite tenses such as the future and the past.
- The active and passive voices, intransitive verbs, and reflexive verbs.
- The indicative and subjunctive moods.
- Types of sentences: pure and simple statements, questions, informative statements, commands, oaths, prayers, hypotheses, explanations, and imprecations (vocatives).

Blank and Atherton (2003) have added an account of how grammar was structured according to Stoic theories. Thus, in addition to the article

(*arthron*), the Stoics were pioneers in the study of the noun, the verb (*rhe-ma*), the conjunction (*syndesmos*), and the pronoun (*antonymia*), among others. It should be added that Stoic semantics established a rigorous classification of “sayables” (*lekta*) and axioms (Castagnoli, 2025, pp. 315–342).

These theories have been undermined by Neo-stoicism. This circumstance not only destroys one of the three fields of the triad but also distorts the other two. For example, ignorance of noun inflection limits awareness of actions directed against other subjects (accusative) or those performed by them (genitive); it also obscures the ways in which a person addresses another interlocutor (whether by cursing them, commanding them, or appealing to them in prayer) and the consequences of each of these linguistic impacts.

Exercises in Oratory and Language

The Stoa trained its students through exercises ignored by Neo-Stoicism. An example of this is the variations on a theme that Fronto required Marcus Aurelius to perform:

That he compose a maxim (*gnome*) every day and, above all, formulate it in various ways: “Whenever you conceive a paradoxical thought,” writes Fronto, “turn it toward yourself, vary it with different figures of speech and nuances, experiment with it, and clothe it in splendid words” (Hadot, 2013, p. 410).

Note how this activity could find its counterpart in ethics if Holiday or Vázquez were to encourage the daily variation of a virtue over the course of one or more weeks of training.

Pierre Hadot (2006) reminds us that a large portion of Stoic writings are composed as exercises in rhetorical dialectic. These included activities such as the following:

Discussing, either dialectically—i.e., through questions and answers—or rhetorically—i.e., through uninterrupted discourse—what were called “theses,” theoretical positions presented in the form of questions: Is death a misfortune? Can the wise man fly into a rage? (p. 223).

Theory of Knowledge

“Apprehension” has been the most frequently cited metaphor in the history of philosophy as an epistemological model: knowledge consists of seizing something external. This explanation appears in the 4th century



B.C. in the writings of the founder of the Stoa. For him, knowledge has four levels (representation, assent, kataleptic understanding, and science), each represented by a tighter grasp of the hands:

Holding out his hand with the fingers spread, [Zeno] would say, “This is representation.” Then, curling the fingers slightly: “This is assent.” Then, closing it completely and clenching his fist, he said that this was comprehension (...). Finally, bringing his left hand close and clenching his fist with skill and strength, he said that this is knowledge, which no one enjoys except the wise (Zeno et al., 2002, pp. 60–61).

The metaphor stems from the connection between the Aramaic term for knowledge or understanding (*yadah*) and the hand (*yad*) (Elorduy, 1972a, p. 20). According to this view, knowledge arises from a representation. This representation may be false (phantasmagorical) or true. If the assent of judgment, the *synkatathesis*, is applied to real images, kataleptic understanding will be formed (Hankinson, 2003, pp. 60–65). Otherwise, reality would not be correctly apprehended, producing images that confuse the subject and cause them to see, hear, smell, or taste representations that do not correspond to what is actually before them. Finally, science is founded on a dual apprehension (one hand clasping the other); i.e., it manifests the profound certainty that the captured truth is reliable.

This explanation is expanded upon when dialectic is compared to rhetoric:

Zeno of Citium, having asked himself how dialectic differs from rhetoric, closed his hand and then opened it, saying, “In this,” intending to convey, through the closing [of the hand], the ordering, precise, and concise nature of dialectic, and through the opening and spreading of the fingers, the broad [scope] of wise rhetorical power (Zeno et al., 2002, p. 65).

Cleanthes describes knowledge as an impression that impacts and transforms. He compares it to the imprint left by a ring on wax, thus following a philosophical tradition that would continue long after his time (Elorduy, 1972b, p. 34).

If we consider the manner in which apprehension occurs, the Stoics depict the soul as an octopus that extends its tentacles over the five senses, obtaining external information from them (Brun, 1977, p. 53). This theory underscores the materialism and sensualism of the Stoa: knowledge is presented as a material or “tangible” transfer from the exterior to the interior of the subject. In fact, a cone extends from the eyes, with the pupils as its apex and the object of cognition as its base. Auditory



apprehension is similar, though it uses the analogy of waves: the object emits waves that ultimately reach the person's ear—the apex—in a material sense (Brun, 1977, p. 92).

Knowledge is objective if the object's own light combines with that of the subject's soul, and subjective if the light proceeds solely from the person (Elorduy, 1972a, pp. 170–171).

The moderate Stoicism of Panaetius and Posidonius qualifies this epistemological materialism. Understanding does not arise in the senses but in right reason (Barth, 1930, p. 121): one does not know through the former but through the latter. In this way, the groundwork is laid for debates that would flourish centuries later when the question arose as to whether cognitive activity depends on the senses or on the *nous*.

Stoic epistemology reveals a certain naivety, since the immediate connection between the senses and reality prevents them from doubting the information that comes from them, as Elorduy explains:

To doubt that one knows what one knows from evident experience; to doubt that one wills when one concentrates all one's energies on one's will; to doubt that one lives when one feels full of life—is as absurd and abnormal as for me to doubt that I am myself (Elorduy, 1972b, p. 20).

The time had not yet come to distinguish between the Kantian noumenon and phenomenon.

Not only does thought correspond to reality, but so do words, since we are what they say. This idea had not only emerged in the Eastern tradition of Zeno, but Aristotle had also argued that language manifested the essence of thought and, therefore, of the *logos* (Pohlenz, 2022, p. 53). In this sense, it should be recalled that the *tonos* constituted the force that held the entire universe together from the dimension of the *logos*. Now, the *logos* constitutes the rational force that facilitates assent and enables the person to remain steadfast in virtue and detached from the passions. For this reason, epistemology possesses practical dimensions linked to all dimensions of the subject, as Amir (2011) has demonstrated.

Conclusions

Building on the preceding sections, these conclusions will focus on two points. On the one hand, they explain how Neo-stoicism distorts the three pillars of classical theory from Zeno to Epictetus. Although ethics was one of the bastions of Stoicism, it must be balanced with *physis* and logic. On the other hand, these conclusions offer some basic recommendations



for Neo-stoicism to realign itself with classical theory. This will help avoid a pathological inclination toward a perspective that strays from the teachings of Chrysippus and other Stoic logicians.

A Distorted Triumvirate

Epictetus warns his disciples that an excess of dialectic hinders the progress of “goodness and honesty”—i.e., of morality (Epictetus, 1993): unchecked reason can generate “presumption and vanity” and cause students to “become conceited and filled with pride” (p. 82). However, when asked whether the teaching of the *logos* should therefore be eliminated, he is unequivocal: “Do I suppress these abilities? Of course not! Nor do I suppress the sense of sight” (p. 82).

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It is essential to learn the tools of rhetoric, oratory, and logic because they are the pillars of the Stoic triad. The ontological implications of the *logos* emphasize that attention to language (the philosophy of language), to sound reasoning (logic and dialectic), to the sequence of the act of understanding (epistemology), and to effective speech (rhetoric and oratory) facilitates the proper unfolding of morality and (meta) physics. When logical inferences are trained, when the five virtues of oratory are improved, when the skills to construct or refute an argument are strengthened, and when words are crafted, one is not merely addressing logical dimensions; rather, one is forging a more rational subject who is conscious of the very essence of reality.

Without Stoic logic and dialectic, morality is reduced to a burdensome Decalogue devoid of existential meaning, observed, at best, merely to achieve happiness. Without logic, the individual will not understand that adherence to morality is more than a heteronomous obligation separate from the ontology of reality. Without it, adherence to the moral law may be understood as the result of a divine command, but not as something rooted in the rational nature of reality.

From this perspective, one can understand the error involved both in reducing logic to the training of discursive (kataleptic) judgments and, even more seriously, in degrading logic (or reducing it) to morality and causing it to disappear through explicit appeals to Seneca’s *cavillationes* or Ariston’s criticisms.

What should be learned?

However, theory cannot remain a pipe dream; rather, it requires setting two objectives: to revive the study of (and practice in) the elements of

logic discussed above, and to connect every logical activity with its ethical and physical dimensions.

Contemporary Neo-Stoicism is shaped by systematized ideological frameworks such as therapy, entrepreneurship, narcissistic individualism, and productivism. These constraints obscure the critical dimensions of philosophy that warn that it is no one's servant, but serves only itself. Philosophy can yield practical results; however, if its objectives are alien to its critical nature, it becomes an instrument that loses its true essence.

For all these reasons, it is urgent to recover the Stoic practices obscured by the tyranny of the ideology that drives Neo-stoicism—or, at the very least, to clarify that these currents are not philosophical but rather psychological, business-oriented, or productivist (Barrientos, 2023).

Regarding logic, the problem does not lie in a lack of practice in this field but rather in the inability (or ideology-driven laziness) of Neo-stoics to fully engage with this dimension. Salvation lies on the periphery. The oasis can only be found if one has walked through the desert. Denying the existence of the periphery or the oasis reveals the weakness of the Neo-Stoic scholar or their adherence to comfort and to normativist and standardized superficiality.

It is not enough to create logical exercises; rather, as we noted in the second objective, an exposition of ethics divorced from its connection to logic (and physics) is a mistake. For pedagogical reasons, one may accept the distinction between the three disciplines. However, it is unacceptable for the connections and interplay among the three to be squandered, or for the demise of one or two to be justified by a writer's ideological biases. Every Stoic exercise should embody the depth of the Stoic trinity. The texts of Epictetus, Seneca, and Marcus Aurelius contain this three-dimensionality even in those examples that lean toward more moral concerns: the rhetoric of the maxims, the logic of the reflections, and the ontological and physical nature of the moral teachings—which refuse to be a mere pragmatic and stripped-down Decalogue—all demonstrate the continuity of the database trinity. Within this framework, the Stoics acted, thought, and lived.

Exercises in logic, rhetoric, dialectic, and oratory—as well as those arising from self-awareness or the cultivation of a new way of perceiving based on the theory of knowledge—should pave the way for Neo-Stoicism to replace its business-oriented, therapeutic, and productivity-driven bias with the authenticity of its origins: *logos* and rationality.



Notes

1. A less instrumentalized view of philosophical *mindfulness* can be found in the work of Michael Weiss (2017).
2. This does not preclude forming alliances with psychology while respecting philosophical foundations (Barrientos *et al.*, 2024), or speaking of a philosophy with therapeutic outcomes (Barrientos, 2026).
3. The capitalist trend has had serious consequences for education, as evidenced by the study of its influences on Brazilian and Chilean education (Rodríguez Mancilla *et al.*, 2018, pp. 259–286).
4. “W. Trillitzsch examines the main passages in which Seneca ridicules the dialectical subtleties of the Stoics. These include Epistles 59, 5; 64, 3; 82, 8; 83, 8; 87, 40 ff.; 102, 20 ff.; 106, 11, 12; 109, 17 ff.; 111, 2 ff.; 13, 1, 15, 26J. We cannot dwell on Seneca’s criticism of those he calls cavillatores” (Elorduy, 1972a, p. 203). In this sense, Seneca criticizes Chrysippus on the basis of the “subtleties of formal logic that he employs” (Elorduy, 1972a, p. 327), although his basic orientation is not opposed to *the logos* as the foundation of his philosophy and way of life.
5. This function appears in certain Greek contexts, as Pedro Laín Entralgo notes in his classic work *‘La curación para la palabra en la antigüedad clásica’* (1958).
6. In fact, it is striking that Robertson (2013) outlines the five characteristics of a good rhetorical speech yet does not propose any exercises based on his texts: “1. Correct grammar and a rich vocabulary; 2. Clarity of expression, ensuring that ideas are easily understood; 3. Conciseness, using no more words than necessary; 4. Appropriate style, suited to both the subject and the audience; 5. Distinction, or artistic excellence, and avoiding vulgarity” (p. 49).

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