On the Teaching of Ethics from Polemo to Arcesilaus

Abstract
Less than a century after Plato's death, the Academy's scholarch Arcesilaus of Pitane inaugurates a peculiar oral phase of Academic philosophy, deciding not to write philosophical works or openly teach his own doctrines. Scholars often attribute a radical change of direction to the school under his headship, taking early Stoic epistemology to be the primary target of the New Academy's attack on Stoic philosophy. This paper defends a rival view of Arcesilaus' Academic revolution. Shifting the focus of that attack from epistemology to ethics, the paper illuminates the continuity in development from Polemo to Arcesilaus and the evidence corroborating this continuity.

Key terms: appropriate action, Arcesilaus, cognitive impressions, Polemo, Stoic dialectic

I

The early decades of the Hellenistic period remain one of the most inscrutable phases in the

history of ancient Greek philosophy. With few exceptions, the works written by philosophers

in the early decades of this period have not survived. For scholars who seek to reconstruct and

assess the doctrines of Hellenistic philosophers in the Academy, the obscurity of this difficult

phase poses an unusual challenge. Less than a century after Plato's death, Arcesilaus of Pitane

(ca. 316–240 BCE) succeeds as head of the Academy following the long directorship of Pol-

emo and the brief tenure of Crates of Athens.[1] Unlike his Academic predecessors, Arcesilaus

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[1] Crates' directorship lasts between two and five years. For the approximate dating of his death (between 268 and

264 BCE), see Tiziano Dorandi, *Filodemo: Storia dei filosofi greci e latini. Platone e L'Academia* (*PHerc. 1021*

e 164) (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1991), 58. Crates wrote orations for political assembly and books on comedy, in addi-

tion to works of philosophy, all of which are no longer extant. No doctrinal innovations are attested in the two

main reports on his life: Diogenes Laertius (4.21–23) and Philodemus, *Academicorum Historia* (cols. 15–17).

References to Philodemus' *Academicorum Historia* (*Acad. Hist.*) cite the edition of Dorandi, *Filodemo*.

decides not to write philosophical works. He inaugurates an oral phase of the Academy that has left posterity without the primary materials that historiographers often demand.

One might take some comfort in the view that attributes a "revolution" or "radical change of direction" to the Academy under the directorship of Arcesilaus. According to a reigning consensus, Arcesilaus initiates the change shortly after Zeno of Citium (ca. 333–264 BCE) begins to teach and attract his own entourage of talented disciples. The earliest "Zenonians" gather in the *stoa poikilê* near the agora at Athens around the beginning of the third century BCE, assembling the first generation of philosophers that scholars now refer to as the Stoic school of philosophy. One scholar prefers the phrase "radical change of direction" to describe the attack Arcesilaus set in motion against Zeno's doctrine of cognitive certainty.[2] From Cicero (*Ac*. 1.43–6, 2.59–60, 76–8) and Sextus Empiricus (*M* 7.150-158) it appears that Arcesilaus' polemic with early Stoic theory is at the core of his philosophical activity. Hence the consensus: it seems credible of scholars to explain the Hellenistic Academy's change of direction on the basis of evidence that illuminates his attack on early Stoic epistemology.

Moreover, scholars of this persuasion typically cite the testimony of Numenius (Numenius apud Eusebius, *Praep*. *ev*. 14.6.12) to supplement the contention that Arcesilaus opposed Zeno's epistemology. Numenius cites two reasons for Arcesilaus' critical focus on Stoic philosophy. Apparently, Zeno's professional success in establishing a rival sect of adherents

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[2] John Dillon, *The Heirs of Plato: A Study of the Old Academy (347–274 BCE)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 178, 234–37. For a similar expression of "change," see Malcolm Schofield, "Academic epistemology," in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, ed. Keimpe Algra, Jonathan Barnes, Jaap Mansfeld, Malcolm Schofield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 323–334. Schofield associates the Hellenistic Academy's "change of outlook" under Arcesilaus with a new stance in Academic epistemology.

was a cause for concern,[3] but at the level of doctrine there was the fame Zeno had earned for his most innovative idea, the *phantasia katalêptikê* or "cognitive impression."[4] Emboldened by the evidence of this feud, some scholars opt for the term "revolution" to describe the Acad-

[3] See, for example, Hans von Arnim, "Arkesilaos von Pitane," in *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, vol. I, part I, ed. Georg Wissowa (Stuttgart: Alfred Druckenmuller, 1896): 1164–68; Pierre Couissin, "The Stoicism of the New Academy," trans. Jennifer Barnes and Myles F. Burnyeat, in *The Skeptical Tradition*, ed. Myles F. Burnyeat (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 39 follows von Arnim; Anna Maria Ioppolo, *Opinione e scienza: il dibattito tra Stoici e Academici nel III e nel II secolo a.C.* (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1986), 19–20.

[4] Zeno illustrated his idea of "cognizing" or "grasping" an impression with a hand gesture (Cicero, *Ac*. 2.145, 1. 40–41). Cicero attributes to Zeno a three-part definition of the cognitive impression (*Ac*. 2.77, 18): it is "one which (a) comes from what is, (b) molded and stamped in accordance with that very thing which is, (c) and of a sort that could not come from what is not" (see also D.L. 7.46, 50, Sextus Empiricus, *M* 7.248). As the principal constituents of Zeno's dialectic, cognitive impressions yield for dialectic an empiricist basis for its status qua "science" (ἐπιστήμη, D.L. 7.42.47–50), and thus differentiate Zenonian dialectic from the dialectical arguments of his former teacher Diodorus Cronus (Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2. 2.12). On the relation of Zeno to Diodorus, see Jaap Mansfeld, "Diogenes Laertius on Stoic Philosophy," *Elenchos* 7 (1986): 320; Luca Castagnoli, "How Dialectical was Stoic Dialectic?," in *Ancient Models of the Mind: Studies in Divine Rationality*, ed. Andrea W. Nightingale and David N. Sedley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 152–58. For Diodorus' influence on Hellenistic philosophy more generally, see David N. Sedley, "Diodorus Cronus and Hellenistic Philosophy," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 23 (1977): 74–120.

emy's election of Arcesilaus as scholarch and his ability "to present the systematic renunciation of knowledge as Plato's true legacy."[5] Panoramic summaries of Hellenistic philosophy promulgate this motif of revolution in presenting the early phase of the Hellenistic Academy.[6] In the monumental two-volume sourcebook of principal texts and fragments of the Hellenistic

[5] Jacques Brunschwig and David N. Sedley, "Hellenistic Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Philosophy*, ed. David N. Sedley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 176. For an earlier expression of Arcesilaus' "révolution," see Victor Brochard, *Les sceptiques grecs* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1887), 99–122 at 100.

[6] Cornelia J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy: A Collection of Texts*, vol. III (Leiden: Brill, 1964), 195–96; Peter Adamson, *Hellenistic and Roman Worlds: A History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps*, vol. II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 108. Cf. Carlos Lévy, *Les philosophies hellénistiques* (Paris: Le livre de poche, 1997), 183 who prefers "un changement radical d'univers intellectuel [my insert: dans l'Ancienne Académie]," adding the important caveat that "la rupture fut moins radicale qu'on ne le croit communément." Some scholars follow Lévy's caution in qualifying the "radical change," "rupture," or "revolution." For a summary discussion of modern studies that follow Lévy's caution in this regard, see Woldemar Görler, "Älterer Pyrrhonismus, Jüngere Akademie, Antiochus aus Askalon, § 46 Arkesilaos," in *Die Philosophie der Antike* 4: *Die hellenistische Philosophie*, ed. Hellmut Flashar (Basel: Schwabe, 1994), 786–96 at 821–24. More recently, see H. Tarrant, "One Academy? The Transition from Polemo and Crates to Arcesilaus," in *Plato's Academy: Insights into its Workings and its History*, eds. Paul Kalligas, Chloe Balla, Efi Baziotopoulou-Valavani, Vassilis Karasmanis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming). Tarrant cautions against the motif of radical change or revolution, emphasizing both the doctrinal freedom of Academic research, from Speusippus (d. 339/8 BCE) on through the Hellenistic period, and the school's unbroken commitment to the revision and reformulation of doctrine. For a different non-deviationist account of revision under Arcesilaus, see Charles E. Snyder, "Plato and the Freedom of the New Academy," in *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Plato in Antiquity*, eds. Harold Tarrant, Danielle A. Layne, Dirk Baltzly, and François Renaud (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 58–72 at 62–67.

philosophers, Anthony A. Long and David N. Sedley make use of the term revolution to account for Arcesilaus' reversion to the early dialogues of Plato and his unremitting opposition to Zeno's empiricist theory of knowledge.[7] As for the inspiration Pyrrho might have had on Arcesilaus' transformation of Academic teaching, the view currently prevailing minimizes such inspiration and insists that the correct explanation of the Academy's change ought to begin with Arcesilaus as he inaugurates the school's endeavor to refute early Stoic epistemology.[8]

It would be a mistake, however, to continue endorsing the prevailing view of Academic change. In this paper, I introduce and defend a rival view of Academic change in the early Hellenistic period. It differs from the prevailing view in at least two critical respects. Firstly, this account of change or revolution begins with the scholarch Polemo insofar as he was the first Academic to oppose the use of Zenonian logic (λογικός, "the science of rational discourse"). Polemo regularly protested against the application of this purported "science" in the teaching of ethics. Zeno situated the study of impressions within the discipline of logic, more specifically under dialectic (D.L. 7.43), the part of logic most directly associated with the "compactness and brevity" of true impressions.[9] Thus the rival view articulates and addresses a question

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[7] Anthony A. Long and David N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), Introduction, p. 5, and **68**:445–48.

[8] For persuasive arguments calling into question the influence of Pyrrho on Arcesilaus, see Olof Gigon, "Zur Geschichte der sogennanten Neuen Akademie," *Museum Helveticum* 1, no. 1 (1944): 57–58; Ioppolo, *Opinione e scienza*, 34–40; Carlos Lévy, *Cicero Academicus: Recherches sur les Académiques et sur la philosophie cicéronienne* (Rome: École française de Rome, Palais farnèse, 1992), 22–31.

[9] Rhetoric and dialectic are the two branches of Zenonian logic. Stoic rhetoric is "the science of speaking well with respect to rational discourse in narrative form" (D.L. 7.42.46–47). The "compactness and brevity" of the cognitive

that has been inordinately suppressed by proponents of Arcesilaus' radical change. Namely, does Arcesilaus' opposition to Zeno reinforce Polemo's rejection of Zenonian ethics? I believe a good defense can be made that it does precisely this, and more.

Secondly, the rival view dispenses with the modern term of art *epistemology*. With respect to Arcesilaus' radical change of Academic teaching, the interpretive framework of epistemology subordinates and in some cases completely obliterates the relevance of ethics.[10] In lieu of this framework, this account construes Arcesilaus' opposition to early Stoic philosophy as an opposition to Zeno's robust notion of *sapientia* or σοφία ("wisdom"). The prevailing view thus misses the forest of wisdom for the splintered trees of epistemology. The stable and enduring exercise of wisdom entails that the philosopher puts into practice, not only the virtues, but also the theorems that pertain to physics, ethics, and logic (*SVF* 2.35–6). In fact, both Cicero (*Ac.* 2.115, 2.75–7) and Sextus (*M* 7.155–7) repeatedly frame Arcesilaus' dispute with Zeno as a critical interrogation of Zeno's idealization of the sage. To be clear, the rival view does not

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impression, illustrated by Zeno in the clenching grip of a fist, corresponds to the "compactness and brevity" of dialectic (Sextus Empiricus, *M* 2.7 = *SVF* 1.75). The study of logic is thus bifurcated into the propositional compactness of dialectic and the greater prolixity of rhetoric.

[10] For an overt expression of this subordination, see Gisela Striker, "*Ataraxia*: Happiness as Tranquility," *Monist* 73 (1990), 106. Striker states (my emphasis): "The Pyrrhonists would have done better, I believe, to stay out of the competition for guides to the happy life, and *limit themselves to the field of epistemology*, where they were doing extremely well. (Their counterparts in the Academy seem to have been wiser in this respect.)" See also n.41 below. Cf. Katja Maria Vogt, "Ancient Skepticism," in *The Cambridge History of Moral Philosophy*, ed. Sacha Golob, Jens Timmermann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 88–99. Vogt, in describing "a Socratic strand in philosophy," correctly refers to Arcesilaus as one who "refuses to draw a line between epistemology and ethics."

call into question the existence of a Zenonian "theory of knowledge," nor does it challenge the fact that Arcesilaus interrogated Zeno's account of *epistêmê*. The point of dispute, rather, is the tendency among modern scholars to isolate a "field of epistemology" from Zeno's system, and in their presentation of Stoic-Academic debates to separate the interrogation of knowledge or cognition from the question of virtue. The rival view maintains that in critically examining Zeno's theory of the cognitive impression, Arcesilaus ipso facto also attacked the basis of Zeno's ethical teaching. In dispensing with the heuristic frame of the "field of epistemology," scholars will find a much better interpretive position to capture the ethical significance of the Hellenistic Academy's opposition to early Stoic philosophy.

For the ensuing discussion, it is worth emphasizing how essential the study of logic is for Zeno's conception of wisdom. From Zeno to Chrysippus' more elaborate articulation a generation later, the study of logic yields the ultimate criteria or standards of justification that non-virtuous agents must correctly grasp in order to advance from the performance of imperfect appropriate actions to the perfect appropriate actions of the sage. Expert proficiency in the subject matter of Zenonian logic entails proficiency in the science of dialectic. Dialectic is therefore an integral part of early Stoic curriculum for the cultivation of a virtuous disposition. The following epitome of Stoic dialectic is commonly considered Zeno's early formulation: "the science of conversing correctly with respect to rational discourse in question and answer form" (περὶ τὸν ἐν ἐρωτήσει καὶ ἀποκρίσει λόγον, D.L. 7.42.48-49).[11] Zeno's successors explicate in

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[11] "τὴν [ἐπιστήμην] διαλεκτικὴν τοῦ ὀρθῶς διαλέγεσθαι περὶ τὸν ἐν ἐρωτήσει καὶ ἀποκρίσει λόγον." The text of the passages of Diogenes Laertius is from the edition of Tiziano Dorandi, *Diogenes Laertius: Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). Dorandi (*Diogenes Laertius*, 501) adopts the

greater detail the elements of λόγος or "rational discourse." Although the early formulation of this science already demands, in principle, the ability to distinguish what is true from what is false, Zeno's successors embark on a more ambitious account of "rational discourse" in relation to what is real or what exists external to the rational soul. A more comprehensive formulation of dialectic reflects this development: "the science of things true and false and neither true nor false."[12] The sage's mastery of dialectic extends over a range of content presupposed in Zeno's early formulation, principally the representational content of true *phantasiai* (the purported realities signified by rational discourse), but also those predicates, propositions, and inferences the valid use of which exploit the representational content of true *phantasiai* for stabilizing the unshakeable disposition of wisdom.

Likewise, the ethical significance of Zeno's early formulation of dialectic undergoes greater elaboration. The virtues of this branch of logic are implicated in Zeno's view that dialectic is peculiar to the sage (D.L. 7.83, Alexander, *In Top*. 1.8-14), the ideal of perfect rationality and complete virtue. As scholars concede, Zeno was the first to promote the Stoic ideal that dialectic is peculiar to the sage.[13] The study of logical validity and the forms of inference

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correction supra lineam 49 in manuscript B[2]: reading "τὸν [. . .] λόγον" instead of "τῶν [. . .] λόγων." The accusative singular τὸν λόγον ("rational discourse") underscores the systematic and unified nature of the subject-matter (λόγος) under examination in question and answer form. For discussion of the tripartite coherence of philosophical λόγος for Zeno, see section II below.

[12] D.L. 7.42.49–50: "ὅθεν καὶ οὕτως αὐτὴν ὁρίζονται, ἐπιστήμην ἀληθῶν καὶ ψευδῶν καὶ οὐδετέρων." See Anthony A. Long, "Dialectic and the Stoic Sage," in *Stoic Studies*, idem (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 85–89.

[13] Jonathan Barnes, *Logic and the Imperial Stoa* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 119; more recently, Castagnoli, "Stoic Dialectic," 167–69.

(the basic elements that comprise a dialectical ability to converse correctly) was an indispensable component of Stoic education from its inception (D.L. 7.45–48).

The Academic Polemo objects to a vital component of Zenonian logic by taking aim at the Stoic application of question and answer in the teaching of ethics. As I argue in the next section, Arcesilaus intensifies Polemo's protest against Zenonian logic by attacking the criterial status of cognitive impressions—those *phantasiai* the proper assent to which implies the successful grasp or cognition of the essence of bodies which causally impinge on the soul. Stoic dialectic and the virtue of the Stoic sage depend on the existence of such true impressions.[14] Deprived of the criteria supplied by such impressions, Arcesilaus abrogates the Stoic distinction between two kinds of appropriate action. It turns out that the prescriptive path contrived by Zeno to lead the non-virtuous to wisdom actually leads nowhere, for his prescriptive syllogisms have no secure and unshakeable foundation. Arcesilaus' arguments against Zenonian cognition dispute the criterial status of logic and argument in question and answer form, but in doing so Arcesilaus reinforced Polemo's protest against the kind of prescriptive theory of ethical progress that Zeno first formulated. This continuity between Polemo and Arcesilaus

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[14] The evidence is indirect at best, but Polemo likely rejected in toto Zeno's view that a "criterion of truth" resides in the senses. Cicero's Varro, in recapitulating the historical views of Antiochus of Ascalon, presents the following consensus between (early) Academics and Peripatetics (*Ac*. 1.30): "Quamquam oriretur a sensibus, tamen non esse iudicium veritatis in sensibus. Mentem volebant rerum esse iudicem: solam censebant idoneam cui crederetur, quia sola cerneret id, quod semper esset simplex et unius modi et tale quale esset." We have little reason to doubt whether this report "broadly reflects Polemo's position" (Dillon, *Heirs of Plato*, 174). For analysis of this passage in relation to Antiochus' epistemological views, see Charles Brittain, "Antiochus' Epistemology," in *The Philosophy of Antiochus*, ed. David N. Sedley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 104–08.

is the precondition of understanding Arcesilaus' Academic revolution in its proper philosophical context. Rather than represent an increasing focus on so-called *epistemology* at the expense of either subordinating or effacing the question of action, Arcesilaus' disputations with Zeno and his loyal followers reflect an attempt to free action from the prescriptions Zeno derived from the study of logic.

The paper has three remaining parts. In section II, I introduce the Academic scholarch Polemo and lay out the fragmentary remains of his disagreement with Zeno's teaching of ethics. In section III, I identify the two principal assumptions of recent scholarship that make the prevailing view of Arcesilaus' radical change seem innocuous, even incontrovertible. After challenging both assumptions, I review Zeno's unified conception of philosophical λόγος and thus expand the preliminary sketch of early Stoic dialectic given above. In section IV, I argue that Arcesilaus' use of Socratic interrogation is revolutionary for the clever way that it reinforces his predecessor's protest against Zenonian dialectic and yet subverts any doctrinal teaching of an ethical end for the conduct of life – including the end affirmed by Polemo and his Academic predecessors.

II

Polemo succeeds Xenocrates around 314 BCE and presides over the Academy well into the next century (ca. 270/69 BCE).[15] Sources on Polemo are fragmentary and largely anecdotal.[16] Plutarch reports that Polemo defined ἔρως as "service to the gods for the care and salvation of

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[15] On dating Polemo's death, see Dorandi, *Filodemo*, 53–58. For slightly different dating, see Dillon, *Heirs of Plato*, 159 n. 13.

[16] For a collection of fragments on Polemo, see Marcello Gigante, "Polemonis Academici Fragmenta," *Rendiconti dell'Academia di Archeologia, Lettere e Belle Arti di Napoli* 51 (1976): 91–144.

the young" (*Moralia*, 780D = fr. 113 Gigante). Although little survives of Polemo's actual doctrines, it is remarkable that much of what is transmitted in biographical accounts about the close bonds between teacher and pupil during Polemo's headship attests to Plutarch's report on Polemo's definition of ἔρως. Polemo reportedly idealized a Socratic side of Plato by cultivating the example of a divinely-guided Socratic lover for and among his younger disciples, exhibiting the kind of care for the young that is evident in a number of Socratic dialogues, such as *Alcibiades*, *Theaetetus*, and the pseudo-Platonic *Theages*.[17] Diogenes Laertius, for instance, reports that Polemo, enamoured of his teacher, "emulated Xenocrates in all respects" (κατὰ πάντα ἐζηλωκέναι τὸν Ξενοκράτην, D.L. 7.19.44–45, Philodemus, *Acad*. *Hist*. col. 14.41–45).[18] He pursued an intimate relationship with Crantor and Crates (D.L. 4.17.20, 4.21–22, Phil-

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[17] On ἔρως in the educational culture of Polemo's Academy, see Harold Tarrant, "Socratic *Synousia*: A Post-Platonic Myth," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 43 (2005): 142–45; Harold Tarrant, "Piecing Together Polemo," *Mediterranean Archaeology* 19/20 (2006/07): 228–32. Cf. John Dillon, "A Platonist *Ars Amatoria*," *The Classical Quarterly* 44 (2004): 390 n. 7.

[18] Parallel passages in Diogenes Laertius' *Lives* and Philodemus' *Acad*. *Hist*. indicate that both authors made use of the Hellenistic biographer Antigonus of Carystus (fl. 240 BCE) in reporting on Polemo and Arcesilaus. See Tiziano Dorandi, "La Vie de Polémon. Thème et variations: Antigonos de Caryste, Philodème de Gadara et Diogène Laërce," *Aitia* [Online] 5 (2015), http://journals.openedition.org/aitia/1183; DOI: 10.4000/aitia.1183. For the fragments of Antigonus, see the edition of Tiziano Dorandi, *Antigone de Caryste: Fragments* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1999). Anthony A. Long, "Hellenistic Ethics and Philosophical Power," in *From Epicurus to Epictetus: Studies in Hellenistic and Roman Philosophy*, idem (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 15 concludes that Antigonus "was close enough in date to his subject matter to have appeared ridiculous if the general tenor of his biographies was fabrication." On Antigonus' presentation of Arcesilaus in particular, see Long, "Arcesilaus in His Time and Place," in *From Epicurus to Epictetus*, 98–101.

odemus, *Acad*. *Hist*. col. 15.31–46), his housemate and later his successor as scholarch preceding Arcesilaus' ascendancy. Pupils in Polemo's Academy, inspired to learn from and keep close to the ethical example their teacher modelled in his daily activities, reportedly built huts to live close to the scholarch and the lecture halls. The pupil's emulation of the erotic educator was an ideal of Academic pedagogy. A younger Arcesilaus acclaimed Polemo and Crates the divine remnants of a Golden Age (D.L. 4.22.16, *Acad*. *Hist*. col. 15.4–10), and decades earlier a younger Polemo, in choosing to model his activities on Xenocrates, set out on the austere journey of discovering his own "self by what he saw in Xenocrates."[19] As the latter's successor, the evidence indicates that Polemo famously endeavoured to be an example for younger philosophers living in the close physical proximity of the Academy.

Polemo is arguably more famous today for his relation to Zeno, his former pupil and founder of the Stoic school. Zeno arrived in Athens around 311 BCE, studying with Crates of Thebes (a pupil of Diogenes the Cynic), the Megarian Stilpo, the dialectician Diodoros of Cronus, and with Polemo in the Academy (D.L. 7.2, 25, Cicero, *De fin*. 4.3), the site where more than one ancient source reports that Zeno first encountered his younger contemporary Arcesilaus (Numenius apud Euseb. *Praep*. *evang*. 14.5.11, *Strab*. 13.1.67).[20] Zeno's mature doctrines

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[19] Harold Tarrant, "Improvement by Love: From Aeschines to the Old Academy," in *Alcibiades and the Socratic Lover-Educator*, eds. Marguerite Johnson, Harold Tarrant (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 149. Inspired by Xenocrates' speech on σωφροσύνη, a dissolute Polemo reportedly converted to the life of philosophy in the Academy. Gigante compiles nineteen different allusions in our ancient sources to Polemo's conversion (frs. 15–33). On Polemo's newfound moral austerity following the conversion, see Dillon, *Heirs of Plato*, 161–66.

[20] See also *Ac*. 1.35. According to Numenius, Arcesilaus and Zeno first feuded as disciples of Polemo, and then later as scholarch of the Academy Arcesilaus re-opens the dispute with Zeno, but this time outside the Academy. Zeno apparently remained quiet and still in response to the renewed attack. Woldemar Görler, "Theophrastus, the

are an innovative synthesis of an eclectic educational experience. He adapted the ethical *telos*

of τὸ ὁμολογουμένως τῇ φύσει ζῆν ("living in accordance with nature," D.L. 7.87.562, Cic-

ero, *De fin*. 4.13, compare Stobaeus, *Ecl*. 2.75.11–76.3) promoted by his teacher Polemo (*De*

fin. 4.3, 14-18, 61), the Academic Xenocrates (*De fin*. 4.3, 15, Clement of Alexandria, *Strom*.

2.22), and as some sources attest both Aristotle (*De fin*. 4.15) and Theophrastus (*De fin*. 4.3,

Plutarch, *Comm. not*. 1069E–F).[21] Zeno inherits this conception of the *telos* and the Cynic ideal

of virtue's self-sufficiency (*De fin*. 5.79), integrating both tenets with his own fundamentally

(but not strictly) empiricist thesis, according to which "cognitive impressions" supply the crite-

ria of truth. The integration brings with it a major internal renovation of a tripartite division of

philosophy into logic, ethics, physics (D.L. 7.39–41, see also *De fin*. 4.4, Aëtius 1 proem. 2,

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Academy, Antiochus and Cicero: Reply to John Glucker," in *Theophrastus: Reappraising the Sources*, eds. J.M.

van Ophuijsen, Marlein van Raalte (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 319 disputes this report of

Zeno and Arcesilaus feuding, or even associating, within Polemo's Academy on the basis of dating Zeno's move

to teaching in the *stoa poikilē* ca. 300 BCE. This conventional dating would make Arcesilaus too young (late

teens) to have encountered Zeno in the Academy. Diogenes Laertius's summary (7.2) of Zeno's pedigree reports

that he attended the lectures of Xenocrates, but David Brink ("Οἰκείωσις and Οἰκειότης: Theophrastus and Zeno

on Nature in Moral Theory," *Phronesis* 1 (1955–56): 123–45 at 144) is persuasive in pointing out that Zeno's al-

leged association with Xenocrates is a likely error in the sources, given Xenocrates' death around the same time

that young Zeno arrived in Athens and began his study with Crates the Cynic. I note these ancient reports and the

more plausible corrections, but nothing in my account depends on Zeno and Arcesilaus actually engaging in live

debate within, or even outside, the Academy.

[21] Antiochus is Cicero's probable source for ascribing this view to Aristotle and the early Peripatetics. Brink

("Οἰκείωσις and Οἰκειότης," 141–45) and Dillon (*Heirs of Plato*, 139–140) defend Plutarch's view (*Comm. not*.

1069E–F) that attributes a broadly naturalistic ethics to Aristotle, Theophrastus, Xenocrates, and Polemo.

Sextus, *PH* 2.13) first adopted, it would seem, by Xenocrates (*Ac*. 1.19, Sextus, *M* 7.16).[22] In Zeno's systematic unification of philosophy, no part of philosophy is preferred over any another (οὐθὲν μέρος τοῦ ἑτέρου προκεκρίσθαι), with all three parts being posited for the first time as "mingled" (μεμίχθαι, D.L. 7.40.24–25).[23]

Polemo rejects this way of "mingling" the parts of philosophy, at least indirectly. He directs his protest against a core component of Zeno's integration: the implementation of logical syllogisms, by means of written texts and argument in question and answer form (i.e. dialectic), in the regulative teaching of ethics. The objection targets broadly the formalization of "dialectical theorems" and the requirement Zeno placed on the trainee to absorb the prescriptive

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[22] Cicero (*De fin*. 4.3) and Sextus (*M* 7.16–19) ascribe the tripartite division to Aristotle and the Peripatetics. Aristotle (*Top*. 1.14 105b19–25) does present a similar division, though that division applies to general "propositions," not philosophy per se or a λόγος that belongs to philosophy. Cicero *De fin*. 4.3–6, likely channelling Antiochus' historical views of the division (see also *Ac*. 1.19), is the only source to extend this division from Xenocrates to Speusippus, Polemo, Aristotle, and Theophrastus. For a different view on Antiochus' adoption of the tripartite division, see Malcolm Schofield, "Antiochus on Social Virtue," in *Philosophy of Antiochus*, 173–76.

[23] Following the emendation of προκεκρίσθαι by Dorandi, *Diogenes Laertius*, 500. The standard translation of D.L. 7.40.24–25 (for example, see Jaap Mansfeld, "Zeno and the Unity of Philosophy," *Phronesis* 48 (2003): 120–21) is misleading for following Cobet's editorial conjecture of ἀποκεκρίσθαι, which would then translate as "no part is separated from one another"), where all the other codices of Diogenes' text read προκεκρίσθαι. See I. G. Kidd, "Posidonius and Logic," in *Les stoïciens et leur logique*, ed. Jacques Brunschwig (Paris: J. Vrin, 2006), 30. If, however, the parts of philosophy are considered "mingled," and of equal priority, a later Stoic could deduce that Zeno's conception of parts facilitates a conception of parts as "inseparable," depending on how one conceives the organic coherence of the mingling, whether it is similar to the unity of a living animal (D.L. 7.40.16), an egg (40.18), garden (40.20), or beautiful city (40.22). On the other hand, a Stoic might insist that the very conception of parts already implies some degree of separability within philosophical λόγος.

content of the theorems which he composed in a "technical treatise" (D.L. 4.18.30–34 = fr. 101

Gigante). Zeno was, after all, the pioneer of authoring this genre of writing for the regulation of

action.

> "Polemo regularly said (ἔφασκε)[24] that one should exercise in concrete actions and not in
> dialectical theorems (ἐν τοῖς πράγμασι γυμνάζεσθαι καὶ μὴ ἐν τοῖς διαλεκτικοῖς
> θεωρήμασι), just as those who absorb some technical treatise (τι τέχνιον) on harmony
> without practicing an instrument resemble those who are wondrous in questioning (τὴν
> ἐρώτησιν) but in conflict with themselves in disposition (διάθεσις)."[25]

Scholars today accept that this critical remark takes aim at Zeno's use of the science of dialec-

tic in the teaching of practical ethics.[26] Early Zenonians teach that virtue is a "disposition in

agreement" (διάθεσιν εἶναι ὁμολογουμένην, D.L. 7.89) the achievement of which requires

proficiency in the science of dialectic, and logic more generally. Polemo's remark signals his

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[24] Following Hans Joachim Krämer, *Platonismus und hellenistische Philosophie* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1971), 33

who notes the frequentative function of ἔφασκε ("regularly said"), and thus the likely recurrence of Polemo's

protest against this grounding approach to action.

[25] See the parallel passage in Philodemus, *Acad. Hist.* col. 14.3–6: "[ἐ]δυσ<χ>έραινε δὲ κα[ὶ] τοῖς εἰς [ἀδύ]νατ'

ἀνάγουσι **τὰς ἐρωτήσεις**, ἀξιῶν | **ἐν τοῖς πράγμασιν γυμνάζεσθαι**" ("[Polemo] disapproved of those who

led questions to impossibilities, requiring that they train in deeds"). My emphasis. Dorandi, *Filodemo*, 144–48.

This passage, unlike the parallel at D.L. 4.18, might lead one to believe that Polemo's criticism of those who

brought questions to "impossibilities" took aim at a method of interrogation similar to the one practiced by Arce-

silaus. On the other hand, it could be that Arcesilaus' question and answer method complies intentionally or unin-

tentionally with Polemo's criticism (as I argue in section 3 and section 4), showing by example the inability of

grounding and conveying an ethics of action through a "science" of rational discourse, and thus obliquely promot-

ing the primacy of training in action.

[26] For example, David N. Sedley, "The Stoic-Platonist Debate on *Kathêkonta*," in *Topics in Stoic Philosophy*,

ed. Katerina Ierodiakonou (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 146 and Charles Brittain, *Philo of Larissa: The

Last of the Academic Sceptics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 251 n.56.

disapproval of what Zeno requires for acquiring a virtuous disposition. Zeno inaugurates the genre of writing technical treatises that catalogue ethical precepts for the execution of reasonable actions. Seneca recounts (*Ep*. 83.9) an example of a theorem that Zeno formalized in syllogistic form:

> "No one entrusts a secret to a drunk.
> But one will entrust it to the good man.
> Therefore the good man does not get drunk."[27]

Aristo, Zeno's wayward colleague, joined Zeno in believing that nothing is good except virtue and that the sage is free from opinion (D.L. 7.162–63). He also endorsed Zeno's conception of κατάληψις. Aristo departed, however, from Zeno's nuance with respect to ranking preferred and dispreferred indifferents (for example, health, clothing, reputation, *Ac*. 2.130, *De fin*. 2.43). Aristo composed a treatise *Against the Dialecticians* (*SVF* 1.352, D.L. 7.160–61) in which he objected to the appropriation and mingling of logic and dialectic in the education of the wise. Aristo charged that while dialectical theorems might appear to be a technical skill, they are in fact ἄχρηστα ("useless"). Polemo, in asserting the priority of πράγματα over syllogistic theorems for the cultivation of virtue, may not have repudiated question and answer in such strenuous terms,[28] but it does seem that he found a rare moment of convergence with Aristo in

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[27] Hans von Arnim, *Quellenstudien zu Philo von Alexandria* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1888), 105 speculates that Arcesilaus objected to Zeno's syllogism with the following witticism (Philo, *Plant*. 177): "It would be unreasonable to entrust a secret to someone who is melancholy, asleep, or dying. But it would be reasonable to entrust it to the good man. Therefore, the good man is not melancholy, does not sleep, and does not die."

[28] See Plutarch, *Stoic. rep*. 1045f–1046b (= fr. 122 Gigante), where Chrysippus is quoted: "dialectic was treated seriously by Plato and Aristotle and their successors down to Polemo and Strato, but most of all by Socrates." This sweeping remark is compatible with Polemo's regular objection to Zeno's brand of dialectic,

repudiating Zeno's required implementation of the "science" of dialectic for ethical improvement.[29]

At *De. Fin.* 4.19-21, Cicero alludes to Zeno's "secession" from Academic teaching in the discipline of ethics, and refers explicitly to Zeno's ethical controversiae with Polemo ("Zenonem cum Polemone disceptantem," *De fin.* 4.45 = fr. 128 Gigante, see also 4.44 and 4.60 for Zeno's ethical disagreement as a "verbis discrepare"). Cicero presents Zeno's deviation from the Academy's view of the highest good as a shift that abandons bodily goods and divests imperfect appropriate actions of moral value (*De fin.* 4.26). Cicero in his own persona expresses confusion over Zeno's secession and his actual reason for abandoning lesser goods and actions that accord with our nature. Furthermore, Cicero reproaches Zeno for failing to clarify the cause of his ethical controversies with Polemo. As it seems to Cicero, by divesting appropriate actions and bodily goods of moral value, and for deviating from Polemonian ethics, Zeno transforms the method of cultivating virtue into an excessively pedantic enterprise, convoluting the ordinary meaning of words with his excessive concern for conceptual distinction (4.7). Zeno was, in short, seduced by the "grandeur and magnificence of words" (4.60). Sedley argues convincingly that Polemo's disagreement with Zenonian ethics over the issue of non-moral goods extends to the Zenonian requirement for expertise in the study of logic, ranging

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for to treat dialectic seriously does not amount to ascribing it the status of a science founded on veridical impressions.

[29] Aristo was acclaimed in his day as an outstanding philosopher (*Strab.* 1.15), but his reputation diminishes in later generations even among later Stoics. His increasingly marginal status lends credence to the possibility that later ancient sources (for example, Cicero) replaced Aristo with the more respectable Zeno in recounting Arcesilaus' oral debates with the early Stoics. See Long "Arcesilaus in His Time and Place," 106–7.

from the proper use of terms to those *interrogatiuncula* ("petty little syllogisms," 4.7) which might provoke assent, but do "nothing to alter or converse with the animus of the listener, leaving him no different than before." Zeno's demand for formal rigor in making ethical distinctions presupposes that ethical doctrines converge or "mingle" with doctrines that belong more strictly, according to his own division of philosophical discourse, to a part of philosophy other than ethics. Diogenes Laertius documents the broad scope of Stoic logic, and the systematic view of philosophical λόγος that is implicitly under suspicion in these passages of *De finibus*: "It is through the theory of logic [dialectic and rhetoric] that we see everything in the domain of nature, and also everything in the domain of ethics" (D.L. 7.83.518–521).

As noted earlier, Zeno was the first to systematize in a technical treatise (Περὶ τοῦ καθήκοντος, D.L. 7.4.43) a comprehensive range of "precepts" for how to conduct oneself in a comprehensive range of roles and situations. Zeno's theory of "appropriate actions" (*kathêkonta,* D.L. 7.25) does not elude the negative implications of the protest that Polemo aims at Zeno's dialectical theorems. Let me explain this important point. An "appropriate action," according to Zeno, is "that which when done admits of a *good* or *reasonable justification*" (εὔλογον […] ἀπολογισμόν, D.L. 7.107.783, *SVF* 1.230), though that justification may not come from the agent himself (*SVF* 3.394). One kind of appropriate action consists of those "right actions" (κατορθώματα, *Ecl*. 5.906.18–907.5) characteristic of the sage: the perfect appropriate actions performed continuously from a firm disposition, in absolute consistency, and in perfect conformity with nature (*De fin*. 3.20). "Appropriate actions" also range over non-virtuous actions: from animal actions directed instinctively at the preservation of their natural constitution to humans who select what is appropriate more or less continuously, more or less

rationally.[30] In this sense, it is considered *reasonable* for one in certain situations to act so as to improve one's health or enhance the material prosperity of one's family. Such deeds however are not yet those of a good or virtuous agent, not until the agent knows why those actions are good. The Zenonian sense of εὔλογος applies perfectly, on the other hand, to the sage—for only the sage is able to articulate the "good justification."[31] The non-virtuous, or weak, sense of εὔλογος, what may be called less strictly a "reasonable justification," seems to refer to actions that agree with precepts (*praecepta*, Cicero, *De off*. 1.6.60, Seneca, *Ep*. 94–5, esp. 94.33–7) for the most part, namely those which Zeno likely formalized in his now lost treatise, specifying what is appropriate in specific circumstances for different agents at varying levels of training. Consistent execution of these *praecepta* inculcates, or begins the process of inculcating, the firm disposition the non-virtuous agent will require for virtuous action (Seneca, *Ep*. 94.18-19).

Imperfect appropriate actions are therfore necessary for Zeno, since their consistent execution prepares the agent for a successful grasp of the principle of ethical action. The regular execution of these actions is nevertheless insufficient for attaining the knowledge of the principle that accounts for why such actions are perfectly appropriate, ethical, and harmonious with

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[30] For an overview of the Stoic theory of *kathêkonta*, see Brad Inwood and Pierluigi Donini, "Stoic Ethics," in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, 675–738. Inwood ("Rules and Reasoning in Stoic Ethics," in *Topics in Stoic Philosophy*, 95–127) gives a compelling argument for the Stoic advocacy of "a situationally fluid, heuristic process of choice, framed (but not determined) by a general normative context," rather than an exception-less and rigid rule-case system. His case is built from post-Panaetian sources (Cicero, *De off*. 3, Seneca *Ep*. 94, 95), so it still remains an open question (for me at least), whether such a situationally fluid heuristc in the teaching of ethics was Zeno's view of *kathêkonta* or a later development designed to withstand or address the Academic criticism of the lack of freedom entailed by being "chained" to precepts (Cicero, *Ac*. 2.8).

[31] Tad Brennan, "Reasonable Impressions in Stoicism," *Phronesis* 41 (1996): 328–29.

nature. The perfection of appropriate actions entails the performance of acts ἀπὸ φρονήσεως "from insight" (*M* 11.200 = *sapienter*, *De fin*. 3.3), the knowing disposition governing the character of κατορθώματα (*Ecl*. 5.906.18–907.5).[32] This performance entails the mastery of giving assent to true impressions and the correct inferences or deductions from those impressions that lead to the systematic knowledge of nature.[33] "Right action" requires that the agent know, as the *end* or *goal* of his actions, φύσις in a universal sense,[34] such that the agent knows and consistently does what he ought to do as that which perfectly agrees with φύσις. And to be sure, the perfection of appropriate action is unattainable without the correct application of cognitive impressions.

Having defined virtue as knowledge, and associated ἐπιστήμη with φρόνησις (Plutarch, *De virt. mor*. 442C = *SVF* 1.201), Zenonian doctrine thus promotes a robustly coherent understanding of philosophy. A set of views or theorems that fall within one part of philosophical λόγος (for example, ἠθικός) are coherent with views or theorems within each of the other

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[32] κατόρθωμα may not have been Zeno's technical term for "right action," according to Ioppolo, *Opinone e scienza*, 131–33. In response, Henry Maconi, "*Nova Non Philosophandi Philosophia*: A review of Anna Maria Ioppolo, *Opinione e Scienza*," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, vol. VI: 249 n. 53 cites Cicero's "recte factum" at *Ac*. 1.37 as the Latin translation of Zeno's (likely) usage of κατόρθωμα.

[33] On this point, Brennan ("Reasonable Impressions," 324–25) is right to underscore that cognitive impressions of the sage include, in addition to non-perceptual cognitive impressions, what Brad Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 55–56 refers to as *hormetic impressions*: impressions that present or prescribe what the sage is to do in a specific situation.

[34] Clement (Philo, *SVF* 3.512) reports that the perfection of *kathêkon* involves acquiring the "knowledge" of a fixed goal for how one should act throughout the whole of life.

two seemingly non-ethical parts of philosophy (λογικός and φυσικός), respectively. The ethical part of Zenonian philosophy, in other words, stands in a relation of reciprocal supplementation with the inferences of logic and the exposition of a universal notion of φύσις. Zeno's tripartite division entails the division of *sapientia* into three parts (*Ac*. 2.116, cf. 2.114). The coherence of Zenonian philosophy is unusually robust in the sense that the views originally assigned to the non-ethical parts of philosophy finally come to be grasped by the sage as perfectly harmonious with the fulfilment of ethical life. The novelty of Zeno's unification of philosophy is undeniable. By adjusting our scope beyond the narrow confines of Zeno's *epistemology*, a rival view of Academic revolution has already begun to emerge. To anticipate the direction of the argument: on this rival view, Zeno's methodology for ethical training is the contested point of reference in relation to which the teaching of ethics in the early Hellenistic Academy from Polemo to Arcesilaus undergoes transformation. In the next section, an argument for this view proceeds by undermining two common assumptions that continue to sustain a narrow epistemological view of the early Hellenistic Academy's radical change, a view that obstructs the significance of action and the teaching of ethics in the onset of that change.

III

Scholars often assume that Arcesilaus vocally campaigned for a particular historical legacy. If Academics, Peripatetics, Megarians, Cynics, and the new sects of Epicurus and Zeno competed for talented pupils in the early decades of the Hellenistic period, then it might seem valid for

scholars to infer that an intellectual atmosphere of rival schools at Athens produced an unprec-

edented amount of "squabbling about philosophical pedigrees."[35] With Zeno's upstart school

foregrounding the Cynic aspects of a certain Socratic ethics, it might be sensible to enlist Arce-

silaus in the service of an opposing claim for a distinct Socratic pedigree based on a select por-

tion of Plato's early dialogues.[36] To be sure, Arcesilaus emulated a certain example of Socrates'

oral method depicted in a number of Plato's so-called aporetic dialogues. The evidence for

Arcesilaus' advocacy, however, does not warrant the following supposition: that given the apo-

retic nature of his emulation Arcesilaus must have openly made some *claim* for a particular So-

cratic legacy based on a reading of the dialogues.[37] On the contrary, Arcesilaus' use of the

Socratic example involves the suspension of making the kind of claim or proclaiming the kind

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[35] The phrase is taken from David N. Sedley, "The Motivation of Greek Skepticism," in *The Skeptical Tradition*,

ed. Myles F. Burnyeat (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 16. Sedley attributes the "squabbling" to

Hellenistic philosophers generally.

[36] Sedley, "Greek Skepticism," 15–16; Christopher J. Shields, "Socrates among the Skeptics," in *The Socratic

Movement*, ed. Paul A. Vander Waerdt (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 343; Long, "Plato and Hellenistic

Philosophy," 426–27. Against this anachronistic way of dividing the corpus for reconstructing Arcesilaus' appro-

priation of Plato's Socrates, see Charles E. Snyder, "The Socratic Benevolence of Arcesilaus' Dialectic," *Ancient

Philosophy* 34 (2014): 345–352.

[37] Anthony A. Long, "Socrates in Hellenistic Philosophy," *Classical Quarterly* 38 (1988): 156: "Arcesilaus

pinned his credentials … and his dialectical practice, on Socrates, and *claimed* that Plato's dialogues should

be read in this light." Emphasis is mine. For a similar use of this assumption, see Julia Annas, "Plato the Scep-

tic," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, Suppl. Vol. (1992): 43–72 at 47.

of belief that a philosopher would need to make in arguing for the legitimacy of one's pedi-gree.[38] Generally speaking, it is not incumbent upon an emulator of a philosophical archetype to argue openly for the legitimacy of one archetype over another in order to be considered an heir of the chosen archetype. This applies to Arcesilaus, and his relation to the archetype of the Platonic Socrates that he chose to revive. In other words, it was a live possibility for Arcesilaus to revive a Socratic side of Plato in the regular practice of his method without needing to defend through positive argument the Socratic pedigree of that method, or for that matter, a definitive interpretation of Plato's corpus. In fact, our sources attest that Arcesilaus' style of Socratic discourse withheld the kind of claim or belief necessary to establish in argument such a legacy. If one imagines that Arcesilaus had been prone on occasion to argue for (pro) such an interpretation of the aporetic Socrates, or the Platonic corpus generally (about which there is no direct or indirect testimony), then one should also concede that he may have argued against (contra) those very interpretations, given the abundant evidence for his exercise of in utramque partem dicendi ("arguing on both sides"), that is, of disputing contra omnia semper ("always against everything," *De fin*. 5.10) and affirming nothing (*Ac*. 1.45, see also *Ac*. 2.7, 60, *Tusc*. 2.9, *De orat*. 3.67).

In a study of Diogenes Laertius' *Life of Arcesilaus*, Long reiterates a thesis that recent scholars neglect in presenting Arcesilaus' encounter with Zeno's philosophy.[39] According to

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[38] On the two kinds of belief for Arcesilaus and the meaning of *epochê peri pantôn*, see Michael Frede, "The Sceptic's Two Kinds of Assent and the Question of the Possibility of Knowledge," in *The Original Sceptics: A Controversy*, eds. Myles F. Burnyeat, Michael Frede (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 129–141.

[39] For a useful collection of fragments and testimonia on Arcesilaus, see the new edition of Simone Vezzoli, *Arcesilao of Pitane: l'origine del Platonismo neoaccademico* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014).

Long, Arcesilaus continues a "stress on the Socratic side of Plato" that Polemo already began to emphasize for his pupils within the Academy. That thesis complies with Krämer's defense of the "kontinuierlichen Fortbestand des dialektischen Wechselgesprächs „sokratischer" Art innerhalb der akademischen Schule bis zur Periode der Zugehörigkeit des Arkesilaos" ("continuing existence of the Socratic art of dialectical cross-examination within the Academic school up until the period of Arcesilaus' membership.")[40] The arguments of Long and Krämer for Socratic continuity in the early Hellenistic Academy are persuasive as far as they go, but those arguments nevertheless efface the practical significance of the Socratic continuity that both identify, as each separates the Zenonian theory of virtue from the logical doctrines that are "mingled" with that theory. While Arcesilaus does direct Socratic cross-examination more explicitly against Zeno's impressions, Krämer and Long partially distort the ethics of Socratic continuity motivating Arcesilaus' method inasmuch as they characterize his method in terms of its "opposition to Zeno's epistemology."[41] This characterization can be fairly innocuous provided that it does not altogether sever, implicitly or explicitly, Zeno's so-called epistemology

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[40] Krämer, *Platonismus*, 34. See also Rudolf Hirzel, *Untersuchungen zu Cicero's Philosophischen Schriften* III (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1883), 38. Hirzel is, to my knowledge, one of the first modern historiographers of ancient philosophy to acknowledge the influence of Polemo's practical philosophy on Arcesilaus.

[41] Long, "Socrates in Hellenistic Philosophy," 159–60; Krämer, *Platonismus*, 9–10. Preceding Krämer and Long, Couissin in his influential paper ("New Academy," 32) posits a narrow epistemological description of the opposition. He states that "the sole purpose" of Arcesilaus' criticism of Zeno consists in a "refutation of the Stoic theory of knowledge," to show that "knowledge, as the Stoics conceive it … does not exist." As already mentioned above, analysis of Arcesilaus' opposition in terms of epistemology is widespread; in conformity with Striker, "*Ataraxia*," 106 see for example Charles Brittain, "Arcesilaus," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Zalta (Fall 2008), https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/arcesilaus/; Diego Machuca, "Ancient Skepticism: An

(or what is more accurately termed the field of logic) from his ethical teachings. The prominence of a modern notion of "epistemology" in this reconstruction of early Stoic-Academic debate conceals the negative ethical implications that follow from the challenge that Arcesilaus directs at the doctrine of cognitive impressions.[42] Long, to his credit, suspects that "the mature Arcesilaus would have endorsed" Polemo's rebuke of Zeno's application of dialectic in the teaching of ethics.[43] Notwithstanding this conjectural reference of continuity in the teaching of

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Overview," *Philosophy Compass* 6 (2011): 236; Lloyd Gerson, *From Plato to Platonism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 166; Anna Maria Ioppolo, "Arcesilaus," in *Skepticism: From Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Diego Machuca (London: Bloomsbury, 2018). I thank Professor Ioppolo for sharing a pre-publication draft of the paper and permitting me to cite it.

[42] See Carlos Lévy, "The New Academy and Its Rivals," in *A Companion to Ancient Philosophy*, eds. Mary Louis Gill, Pierre Pellegrin (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 448–49. Lévy's account is the only account to qualify the "opposition to Zeno's epistemology," noting that when Arcesilaus (and his Academic successors) "attacked Stoic epistemology, they aimed not just to refute that theory of knowledge, but to bring down the whole system." For this reason, Lévy wisely avoids using an anachronistic concept of "skepticism" in his discussion of the Hellenistic Academy. The concept "poses real problems" for understanding the Hellenistic Academy in its time and place, given the well-known fact that neither Arcesilaus nor his Academic successors considered expressis verbis their own philosophical school in terms of "skepticism." Cf. Mauro Bonazzi, "Plutarch on the Difference between the Pyrrhonists and the Academics," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 43 (2012): 273, 287, 290–93, esp. 292 n39 who uses the phrase "metaphysical scepticism" to describe the Academics with a degree of caution, noting that one may doubt whether such *metaphysical* scepticism "constitutes 'scepticism' at all."

[43] One way to defend Long's passing remark here is to add that the mature Arcesilaus "would have endorsed" Polemo's protest if he had been prone to openly defend his views. Another way is to argue, as I begin to suggest in section IV, that Arcesilaus' effort to undermine Zeno's theory of appropriate action may represent a tacit endorsement of Polemo's protest against Zenonian dialectic in the teaching of ethics.

ethics between Polemo and Arcesilaus, Long's general analysis insulates epistemology from Zeno's ethical teaching.[44] That insulation effectively prevents a comprehensive account of Arcesilaus' opposition to the Stoic idealization of wisdom as the very manifestation of his continuity with Polemo's protest against the syllogistic formality of Zeno's ethical program.

Philodemus reports that Arcesilaus "first defended the position maintained by the school from Plato and Speusippus down to Polemo" (*Acad*. *Hist*. col. 18.7–15, also Cicero, *De orat*. 3.67).[45] Regrettably the next several lines of Philodemus' text (col. 18.16–34) are lacunose, making it difficult to decipher what might have been a clear and relevant statement on Arcesilaus' subsequent deviation from Polemo. The testimony of Diogenes Laertius could be taken to signify that Arcesilaus deviated from Polemo and his Academic predecessors by conducting a "more contentious" (ἐριστικώτερον, D.L. 4.28.7) method of question and answer. Diogenes' report complies with one of the few details that our ancient sources unanimously agree upon: that Arcesilaus disputed the Zenonian criterion of the cognitive impression. In examining Zeno's putative criterion, Arcesilaus granted Zeno's first premise that the wise would not err in assenting to a false impression (*Ac*. 2.77). But after undermining Zeno's justification for the existence of true impressions, Arcesilaus inferred that Zeno's sage would encounter nothing to rationally warrant assent. The sage must therefore suspend judgment about everything, given

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[44] Krämer, *Platonismus*, 10: "Daß eine ungebrochene Wiederholung nicht vorliegt, zeigt zum wenigsten die Tatsache, daß der ursprünglich ethische Impuls des sokratischen Gesprächs bei Arkesilaos in den Hintergrund getreten ist und einem mehr formalisierten, theoretischen Begriff von Dialektik Platz gemacht hat."

[45] See Cicero, *De fin*. 5.94 (= fr. 75 Gigante) for a telling remark by Piso, the defender of Antiochus' ethics. Piso says, "Arcesilas tuus, etsi fuit in disserendo pertinacior, tamen noster fuit; erat enim Polemonis" ("Your Arcesilaus, although rather stubborn in arguing, was nevertheless was one of us. For he was of Polemo's lineage").

the initial premise. In this light, Arcesilaus' manner of questioning does appear to be less asser-

tive and more contentious than either Academic questioning in the early Hellenistic period (in

the light of the very few fragments that are preserved for this period) or for that matter Zeno's

affirmative science of question and answer.

But does a rise in contentiousness point directly to a radical departure from Polemo's

teaching in the Academy? Not exactly: in one sense Arcesilaus' intensification of contentious

questioning strengthens Polemo's rejection of Zenonian ethics, attacking more directly than

any of his Academic colleagues the ground of Zeno's ethics. Recall that for Zeno the ideal phi-

losopher attains wisdom by "applying his or her knowledge to the natural order" (*De fin*. 4.14).

Knowledge of nature is not only a theoretical achievement for the sage; it is also the final stabi-

lization through repeated actions of an increasingly virtuous disposition, which results in a

complete harmony with nature. Zeno was the first philosopher of antiquity to incorporate a

doctrine of cognitive impressions in a program of education that purportedly cultivates the pro-

gressive formation of the aspiring sage's systematic knowledge, and the first philosopher to

posit the necessity of correct reasoning from these impressions in the progressive realization of

a sage's complete virtue. The connection between dialectic and ethical progress becomes even

more manifest in what appears to be Chrysippus' teaching that "precipitancy in assertions ex-

tends to actual events so that those who are not trained in impressions tend to disorderliness

and randomness" (ὥστε εἰς ἀκοσμίαν καὶ εἰκαιότητα τρέπεσθαι τοὺς ἀγυμνάστους

ἔχοντας τὰς φαντασίας, D.L. 7.48.108–109). From Zeno to Chrysippus, orthodox Stoics

taught that a philosopher in training advances to wisdom by gradually mastering the activity of

assenting to impressions and regulating his rational impulses and movements toward the true

objects of assent, progressing from the apprehension of particular impressions and assertions to

a firm and infallible disposition of systematic wisdom (D.L. 7.47, *Ac*. 1.41–2, 2.77). In challenging the early Stoic criterion of truth, Arcesilaus disputes and attempts to undermine the orderly prescriptions of Zeno's ethical teaching.

Thus far I hope to have called into question the articulation of a prevailing view that restricts Arcesilaus' radical change to the field of epistemology. If the scope of Arcesilaus' dispute with Zeno also takes aim at the Zenonian domain of ethics, questioning a limine the possibility of κατάληψις, then we should dispense with viewing the dispute through the diminutive lens of epistemology. Two additional passages attest to Arcesilaus' dispute with Zenonian ethics and confirm the view that in strengthening Polemo's criticism of dialectical theorems against Zeno, Arcesilaus carries forward his predecessor's objection to dialectical science, doing so in such a way that Polemo's own teaching of practical ethics becomes questionable.

IV

Zeno's loyal successor Cleanthes observed the following about his older contemporary Arcesilaus: "Even if he [Arcesilaus] does away with appropriate action in *argument* (λόγῳ), he affirms it at any rate in his *actions* (τοῖς ἔργοις)."[46] Presumably, Cleanthes was aware of Arcesilaus' disputations with Zeno's theory of virtuous action and his attempt to undermine the formal exposition of precepts regulating the progress of the non-virtuous. And yet, Cleanthes' remark suggests that Arcesilaus in his everyday life acted in a manner that was consistent, at least in one respect, with Zeno's doctrine of imperfect appropriate action. Arcesilaus' actions

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[46] D.L. 7.171.44-45: "ἔφη, 'καὶ μὴ ψέγε· εἰ γὰρ καὶ λόγῳ τὸ καθῆκον ἀναιρεῖ, τοῖς γοῦν ἔργοις αὐτὸ τιθεῖ'."

could be reasonably justified ex post facto even by the Stoic Cleanthes, whether or not Arcesilaus ever justified his actions in this way. In fact, Sextus Empiricus reports that Arcesilaus did invoke the criterion of the "reasonable" (τὸ εὔλογον, *M* 7.158) to explain the regulation of "actions generally" (κοινῶς τὰς πράξεις) without the cognitive impression. That is, after having contested the Zenonian criterion of truth (*M* 7.150–157), Arcesilaus then proceeded to explain how one might act without Zeno's regulative criterion.

Unlike the comment of Cleanthes, the testimony of Sextus centuries later is limited to a description of Arcesilaus' "argument." The report has nothing to offer on Arcesilaus' actions or whether his chosen method of dispute cohered with his actions generally. On Sextus' account, Arcesilaus reduces the robust notion of "right action" (recte factum = τὸ κατόρθωμα) to the ordinary notion of τὸ καθῆκον. One might argue that with such a reduction Arcesilaus launched a partial rescue of Zeno's account of appropriate action.[47] But why, one recent scholar asks in dissent, would Arcesilaus give, gratis, a positive account of action, especially one that employs a component of Zeno's ethics, namely the reasonable justification? It would make little sense for Arcesilaus to have responded in this positive manner after he had undermined Zeno's theory of virtuous action. Why, then, "did he [Arcesilaus] not leave him to stew? We are invited to imagine he first knocked his opponent to the ground and then gave him a hand up again. And that is a most unGreek idea."[48] Indeed, if Arcesilaus had done away with the Zenonian notion of τὸ καθῆκον through argument as Cleanthes alleged, it would be puzzling for Arcesilaus to then recuperate even a part of that teaching in a seemingly positive way.

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[47] von Arnim, "Arkesilaos von Pitane," 1165.

[48] Maconi, "*Nova Non Philosophandi Philosophia*," 247–49; R. J. Hankinson, *The Sceptics: The Arguments of the Philosophers* (London: Routledge, 1995), 274–76.

Couissin's ad hominem interpretation is an elegant response to the puzzle. Sextus' report, according to this interpretation, portrays Arcesilaus merely using Zenonian premises in order to show the incoherence of Zeno's doctrines. Couissin preserves the purely destructive strategy of in utramque partem dicere, a strategy roughly in conformity with the destructive purport of Arcesilaus' arguments mentioned by Cleanthes. Under pressure, perhaps, to explain the conduct of life without a criterion, Arcesilaus once again borrows, without claiming it himself as his belief, a component of Zeno's theory and uses it to attack the practical realization of perfect action. On this interpretation, Arcesilaus has no stake in any practical criterion outside of refuting the Stoic account.[49] Rather than simply helping his Zenonian interlocutor "up off the ground," Arcesilaus would be showing his interlocutor how Zeno's didactic program for virtuous action disintegrates without any prospect of true ethical progress via the criteria of cognitive impressions. One could thus counter that Arcesilaus did help his Zenonian interlocutor "up off the ground" but only in order to knock him down a second and final time, for his interlocutor is now shown that he lacks any real Zenonian prospect of making ethical progress from imperfect actions.

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[49] In his discussion of τὸ εὔλογον, Couissin ("New Academy," 37–40) once again identifies Zeno's theory of knowledge as the main target of Arcesilaus' opposition to the early Stoics "He [Arcesilaus] labored to prove that, contrary to Stoic doctrine, assent was not necessary for action and that in consequence, the Stoic theory of knowledge was not only inconsistent but useless." However, the inverse is more accurate: one proves that (Stoic) assent is unnecessary for action as soon as one proves the inconsistency of the Stoic theory of cognition, for the practical uselessness of that theory (a damaging lesson for Zeno's theory of virtuous action) is entailed by the proof of its inconsistency.

On the other hand, a second interpretation of Sextus' testimony presents Arcesilaus be-
lieving and actually affirming the criterion of the reasonable. On this view, Arcesilaus' reason-
able criterion recuperates an Aristotelian notion of voluntary action (*NE* 1107a14) that
antedates Zeno's ethics and is free from the latter's corresponding catalogue of precepts.[50] Such
actions are simply those that can be given a "reasonable justification" after the action has been
performed.[51] Such a positive reconstruction could take the passage from Sextus as support for
the view that Arcesilaus was aware that he followed a criterion of appropriate action in his ac-
tions, as Cleanthes suggested. Arcesilaus' positive appeal to the reasonable might then function
as an oblique or indirect self-description of his "actions generally" (κοινῶς τὰς πράξεις), in-
cluding his own regular use of the Socratic method to question Zeno and his followers, as well
as his overall commitment to a philosophical life within the Academy. In that sense, Arcesi-
laus' deliberate revival of the Socratic oral method might be a "reasonable" decision about
which he was able to supply a reasonable justification, even while he sought to undermine in
argument Zeno's theoretical account of appropriate action.

Unfortunately, both constructive and destructive ad hominem interpretations of Sextus'
truncated testimony go beyond what historiographers of ancient philosophy are themselves
able to justify in speculating about what Arcesilaus intended or believed with respect to the
reasonable. Sextus' testimony, the only source that reports his explicit appeal to the reasonable,

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[50] Ioppolo, *Opinione e scienza*, 131–34; Frede, "Two Kinds of Assent," 135–36.

[51] Plutarch, *adv. Col.* 1121f–1123b reconstructs a clever defense along these lines, but it is unlikely that this de-
fense derives from Arcesilaus himself, as a number of scholars have shown: Krämer, *Platonismus*, 43; H. J. Mette,
"Zwei Akademiker heute: Krantor von Soli und Arkesilaos von Pitane," *Lustrum* 26 (1984): 92; Maconi, "*Nova
Non Philosophandi Philosophia*," 251 n.54.

is not itself a criterion of conclusive historical judgment. As of now, there is no conclusive or uncontroversial evidence the appeal to which would allow scholars to decide between the equal compatibility or plausibility of constructive and destructive interpretations of Arcesilaus' appeal to the reasonable.[52] Arcesilaus' method of Socratic question and answer resists any such definitive interpretation from second-hand testimony, whether that interpretation is constructive or ad hominem and purely destructive. The oral method of non-assertion may very well entail the fundamental inscrutability of his belief about the reasonable, forcing historiographers to suspend judgment on the matter.

There is, however, a way to make philosophical sense of Arcesilaus' practice. The method of contentious question and answer can be instructive for a given interlocutor even if the contentious interrogator is not committed to an open and explicit affirmation of his own doctrines and beliefs in the course of the examination. What lesson could one learn from participating in such an activity with this kind of contentious and doctrinally elusive interrogator, especially for an interlocutor who comes to the examination already equipped with robust beliefs about nature, logic, and virtue? Although Arcesilaus' emulation of the Socratic example resists a clear and distinct interpretation of his beliefs, one is nevertheless able to make sense of

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[52] David N. Sedley, "Three Platonist Interpretations of the *Theaetetus*," in *Form and Argument in Late Plato*, eds. Christopher Gill, Mary Margaret McCabe (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 89 argues for the equal compatibility of ad hominem and constructive or dogmatic interpretations. See also Lucullus' parody of an Academic describing his chosen method (Cicero, *Ac*. 2.60): "He [the Academic] says, 'it is not our practice to disclose our view'." Other passages in Cicero support the accuracy in Lucullus' parody of Academic self-description (*Ac*. 2.8-9, *Tusc*. 5.33, 83, *Div*. 2.150), at least as Cicero in propria persona describes the method.

Arcesilaus' emulation of a Socratic method as an exemplification of the reasonable independent of determining his actual intent or belief about it.[53] Rather than oppose his interlocutor merely at a doctrinal or formal level with the affirmation of a criterion for action, Arcesilaus' method of interrogation represents the possibility of thinking and judging without a definitive criterion of truth.[54] That is, in becoming a living example of Plato's aporetic Socrates, Arcesilaus' oral activity is potentially instructive for interlocutors because of what the activity *does* in compelling others to reflect on the possibility of improving or abandoning the philosophy one has openly defended – not because of what Arcesilaus openly teaches about it. This reasonable interpretation, then, refrains from attributing to Arcesilaus any doctrinal teaching of a reasonable criterion of action, and yet at the same time it is able to observe the practical significance of Arcesilaus' use of question and answer.

The state of uncertainty regarding Arcesilaus' actual beliefs is not a direct consequence of the precarious nature of our sources, nor is it the direct result of a regrettable tendency among confused ancient authors to present conflicting reports. The uncertainty is, on the contrary, a consequence of the elusive method that Arcesilaus chose to emulate when he restricted himself to live dialogue. But even without a positive assertion of εὐδαιμονία and τὸ τοῦ βίου

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[53] See Cicero, *De nat. deo.* 1.10: "In fact, for those who want to learn, the authority of those who profess to teach is usually a hindrance: they stop exercising their own judgment (desinunt enim suum iudicium adhibere), and take as sanctioned whatever they see to have been the judgment of the person they endorse." See also Galen, *Opt. doctr.* 1.

[54] See Cicero, *Ac.* 2.8: "We are freer and less constrained in that our capacity for judgment is unimpaired (quod integra nobis est iudicandi potestas), for we are not bound by any obligation or necessity to defend all those prescriptions that are practically imposed on us by someone else."

τέλος, Arcesilaus is able to strengthen Polemo's side of the dispute against Zeno's robust commitment to broad coherence among the mingled parts of philosophical λόγος. In using a Socratic style of interrogation in close proximity with a Zenonian interlocutor, Arcesilaus exemplifies Polemo's criticism of the Zenonian teaching of ethics by putting into action a negative or non-scientific form of question and answer. The Socratic side of Plato becomes more contentious under Arcesilaus as he emulates the example of an oral Socrates, showing interlocutors how to continue a search for truth without the underlying support of an indoctrinating account of knowledge and action. In this way, Arcesilaus represents a practical model for resisting the temptation to demand more from a theory of action in the pursuit of ethical progress than one may be able to justify through argument. And yet, his lifelong commitment to a Socratic method expresses his refusal to formally indict the practice of question and answer in the fashion of Aristo as positively useless for action. With respect to Polemo and the development of teaching in Plato's Academy, Arcesilaus' radical change finds expression in another kind of refusal: the one that refrains from openly defending a prescriptive theory of action or life and makes the Academy the first school in antiquity to suspend the teaching of an ethical end for the conduct of life.