

The Physics Mneme

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In Stoic ontology, our theory about the natural world, the cosmos is a unified whole that is finite, spherical, conscious, and providential. It is a living being. Stoics are Pandiasts and believe that all parts of the whole are God. God is Nature, and nature is God.

The Stoic Cosmos has cosmic sympathy, whereby all points in space and time are connected. All things are created from the matter of the universe with each possessing a fragment of Pneuma, the divine breath, the rational organizing principle or soul of the cosmos.

Pneuma is a kind of tension that forms and holds together the cosmos and all bodies of the cosmos. Pneuma is also another name for the Stoic god who acts as the providential ruling force of Nature.

Cosmic Pneuma has three levels of tension: cohesion, nature, and soul. Cohesion is the force that gives unity to a body; nature is the force that gives life and growth to biological organisms; and, soul is the force of conscious life that gives impressions, impulses, and reproduction.

Human Pneuma has four levels of tension: cohesion, nature, soul, and rational soul. Human Pneuma also has three distinct parts—impression, impulse, and assent. All sentient creatures have the impression and impulse of soul, but only humans have the power of assent from the rational soul.

The Active and Passive Principles of nature combine to form bodies that are in some measure self-determining. Thus, Stoics are vitalists, not materialists. For something to exist it must have a body: something that can act, the Active Principle, or be acted upon, the Passive Principle.

Zeno claimed that the virtues actually exist and are bodies, because as aspects of the soul, which is a tension of Pneuma, they are capable of acting or being acted upon.

Stoic causality states that cause exists as a body, whereas effect subsists as a change in the state of a body. The present moment neither exists nor subsists, but *belongs*. Past and future overlap in the present to become an unbroken chain of causes.

As Marcus Aurelius said, “To see things of the present moment is to see all that is now, all that has been since time began, and all that shall be unto the world's end; for all things are of one kind and one form (*Meditations*, bk 6, 37).”

In Stoic causality we must know two basic causes: external and internal. The external cause is Fate, the divine will. The internal cause is the human will. As Epictetus said, even Zeus cannot compromise choices made by the human will. Stoics are *not* fatalists. God is immanent, not transcendent.

Free will gives Stoic philosophy meaning, and without it our philosophy is meaningless. Without free will there can be no personal responsibility for any action taken. The first proof of free will is that we can voluntarily choose to believe that there *is* free will.

Stoics believe free will is compatible with determinism. That makes us compatibilists. With education and effort, one can build a noble character. My argument against the pessimists of hard determinism is love. With love, all living things can change.