

«How did he do this? As an athlete or a philosopher? As a Man.»  
Epictetus, *Discourses*, I 2, 26

# the post-existentialist neo-stoicism of Jason Xenakis and the stoic theory of suicide

by  
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To determine the rational and the irrational<sup>1</sup> and to learn to apply these «protoconcepts»<sup>2</sup> to specific instances, two things are needed, said Epictetus,<sup>3</sup> the teacher *par excellence* of Jason Xenakis: education and «the criterion of that which is in keeping with one's own character».<sup>4</sup> For, to most men, it is reasonable to endure all sorts of humiliation, to swallow the worst insults, to undergo any mutilation, provided that they remain alive, that they would go on living, regardless of whether this existence is of any value, or whether existence has become a morally indifferent matter, in the Stoic sense of the word.<sup>5</sup> «For different men sell themselves (their moral purpose) at different prices» Epictetus continues. Most men forget their «proper character» and are content to be «a mere thread of the garment».<sup>6</sup> Whereas others, the few, value themselves more highly and prefer to keep their character at all costs. For the latter any compromise in moral questions is irrational. It is contrary to reason and thus contrary to Nature.<sup>7</sup> And all familiar with Stoicism know how central a notion was reason (*logos*) to the pre-Hegelian Stoic panlogism (not only in logic, but also in physics and ethics). Reason (and

—I would like to thank Mr. G. Giannaris for having kindly placed at my disposal Xenakis' early writings and given me information about him as a man and teacher. Though familiar with his works on Stoicism, I cannot claim to have been personally acquainted with him, having met him only once. What follows is entirely based on assumptions drawn from his writings and written immediately after his death five years ago.

1. By «rational» or «reasonable» I translate the Greek word *eulogon* as it occurs in Epictetus and the early Stoics in some particular cases such as *aireseis eulogous* and *eulogous εξαγωγή*. The term may sometimes be translated as «probable» in other cases (*probabile* in Latin) and is very important to Epictetus who speaks of a «preconception» of it.

2. For the Greek term *prolēpisis* which scholars render as «preconception», «basic concept» or «anticipation», Xenakis prefers the rendering «protoconcept» as shorter and less misleading than the other translations. See *Epictetus, Philosopher-Therapist*, The Hague 1969, 59.

3. *Discourses* 1, 2, 6.

4. *Dis.* 1, 2, 7: *Εἰς δὲ τὴν τοῦ εὐλόγου καὶ ἀλόγου κρίσιν οὐ μόνον ταῖς τῶν ἐκτὸς ἀξίαις συγχρόμεθα ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν κατὰ τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ἑκάστος*. The whole *Discourse* is concerned with «how may a man preserve his proper character upon every occasion».

5. From the moral point of view things are divided by the Stoics into good, bad and indifferent. See *SVF* III 70-71.

6. *Dis.* 1, 2, 11-18.

7. This is implicit in the Stoic *telos*-formula «living in accordance with nature» which amounts to «living according to reason». Xenakis lays more emphasis on reason than on nature: «Epictetus' precept to live agreeably with nature is reducible to the advice to live *realistically*... or of course reasonably, insofar as the Stoic appeal to nature is regarded as a misguided appeal to human reason» (*Epictetus* 55).

especially upright reason) was identical with Nature and God<sup>8</sup> for Stoic *Logosphilosophie*.<sup>9</sup>

Among those few who, though holding an eudaemonistic view of life in a non-naturalistic sense<sup>10</sup> and being of an optimistic disposition, did not hesitate to depart from it of their own free will, as soon as life ceased to be worth living, Epictetus mentions an Olympian athlete who was in danger of dying unless he submitted to an operation.<sup>11</sup> He refused the treatment and died, death being preferable to amputation; for although his athletic ability would not have been lost, he would have felt shame among his fellows, and loss of self-esteem. This would also have been inconsistent with the teaching of the philosophical school of which he was a member. Yet Epictetus, in praising him for his decision, remarked that he did not act either as an athlete or a philosopher but as a «man».

This comment has been variously interpreted. Bonhöffer<sup>12</sup> considers this case of suicide as justified by the sense of honor which would have been injured if the athlete had preferred to go on living mutilated, and not by any moral principle. J.M. Rist<sup>13</sup> treats this «curious» passage, as he puts it, as «a perversion of the older and commonplace Stoic view that a man may die for his principles», relating it to questions of character. Xenakis himself, regarding the act as an expression of courage, assumes that in praising the athlete's act Epictetus may be condoning euthanasia.<sup>14</sup> However we interpret this passage, the property of man is not here to be separated from that of the philosopher, and especially of the Stoic philosopher. By «man» Epictetus means, says Xenakis,<sup>15</sup> a rational human being, and he adds: «By classifying oneself as a human being, one is committed to be a Stoic, that is, to regard reason as sovereign. «Man» thus can stand for a rational being, and moreover for a free being, used to exercising his freedom not in trifling matters but in questions of life and death; i.e. for a proud personality fully aware of his own «proper character». It is here a case of dignity and adherence to strict principles. Epictetus himself said that he would rather die than shave his beard off,<sup>16</sup> if someone forced him to do so, because he considered it «part of his own mask as a philosopher»,<sup>17</sup> i.e. as a symbol of his philosophical profession, which he deemed to be a ser-

vice imposed by God. Both are cases of the Stoic unbending pride and dignity, the only virtues of Stoic ethics Christianity could not tolerate. But in no way can pride as a justification of suicide be excluded from the moral sphere, in which the question of suicide was more or less placed by the Stoics.<sup>18</sup> It is the combined virtues of the athlete and philosopher—whose happy coexistence was revived in Xenakis<sup>19</sup>—that must have constructed Epictetus' notion of «man». And this was in harmony with the conception of man in classical Greek thought, as embodying the ideal of the unity of the «good» and the «beautiful».

In this short paper, dedicated to J. Xenakis' memory, I do not attempt to explain the secret of the motivation of his fatal act with Epictetan maxims. My reference to Epictetus is not arbitrary, however, since Xenakis' work on the philosopher constitutes the main contribution of English-speaking literature to the bibliography on Epictetus,<sup>20</sup> the prominent defender of human freedom. Nor do I justify his decision to desert the international society of philosophy. The athlete who chose death over amputation and thus gained the approval of Epictetus is mentioned here only to explain Xenakis' «drastic liberation» in the light of Stoicism, the philosophical movement he revived for himself by both «living and dying its precepts»<sup>21</sup>—to speak in Heraclitean terms—and to whose study he contributed greatly during the last years of his life. I attempt to show his last act as the «last item» of Epictetus' negative ethics which, as viewed by Xenakis, include «analysis, delay, realism, strength, detachment, separation, mediation and suicide».<sup>22</sup> Among these «remedial devices» suicide is «the most drastic method of escaping pain and is used when all else has failed»<sup>23</sup> an alternative method to self control, a rational choice when all other preventive and remedial techniques have proved ineffective, and all resistance methods and other «tonics»<sup>24</sup> impotent to save one's

17. See Rist, *op. cit.*, 252.

18. E. Benz (*Das Todesproblem in der stoischen Philosophie*, Stuttgart 1968, 29) cited by Rist (*op. cit.* 233) regards the problem of suicide related to that of free will in Stoicism from the beginning, with which Rist does not agree.

19. As it can be gathered from his *curriculum vitae*, he was a tennis champion for years. And this was not his only interest in sports.

20. In the preface of his book on Epictetus Xenakis speaks of the paucity of Epictetus' studies. The bibliography by W.A. Oldfather (*Contribution towards a Bibliography of Epictetus*, Urbana 1927-1952), however, amounts to about 1185 titles with translations and commentaries. Yet it seems true that «this (i.e. Xenakis book) is the first book-length commentary published in English devoted only to him» (*op. cit.* IX).

21. See Heraclitus B 62 DK: ζῶντες τὸν ἐκείνων θάνατον, τὸν δὲ ἐκείνων βίον τεινῶντες.

22. Epictetus 83. He explains there that the names of these items are his own but that they somehow get support from the text.

23. *Ibid.*, 23, 84.

24. See ch. 31: «Other safeguards» and 34: «It's fated and other tonics».

8. *SVF* I 162; III 337: Ὁ τῆς Φύσεως ὀρθὸς λόγος ὅς κυριωτέρα κλήσει προσηγομάζεται θεοῦ, νόμος θεοῦ ὄν...

9. M. Pohlenz, *Die Stoa*, Göttingen 1972, 4, v.I, pp. 32-35. Cf. Xenakis, *Epictetus* 54: «Zeus... is preeminently reason... Obeying Zeus boils down to obeying logos... Stoicism is literally the deification of logos».

10. In spite of the central place of nature in Stoic ethics, this is not generally characterized as «naturalistic». G.E. Moore (*Principia Ethica*, London 1903) 110f., considers Stoic ethics «metaphysical» and A.A. Long (*Hellenistic Philosophy*, London 1974, 204) regards it as an «epitome of idealism». Xenakis, however, speaks of a «confused naturalism» (*op. cit.*, 54).

11. *Dis.* I 2, 25-27.

12. *Die Ethik des Stoikers Epiktet*, Stuttgart 1894, 34.

13. *Stoic Philosophy*, Cambridge 1969, 252.

14. *Op. cit.* 17.

15. *Ibid.*, 70.

16. *Dis.* I 2, 29. Cf. *Dis.* III 1 24 and Xenakis, *Epictetus* 2.

identity, integrity and self-image.<sup>25</sup> Xenakis did not depart from life out of weakness of will, lack of courage, or mental imbalance. No other way out was left for him «when the smoke filled the house».<sup>26</sup> Far from being an irrational outlet in a moment of despair, his decision appears to me a «rational» choice, in accordance with the Stoic teaching and particularly the ethics of Epictetus, with which he was familiar and which he practiced. Without trying to justify his act by any practical standard, considering suicide meaningless in matters of life,<sup>27</sup> I wish to express my conviction, based exclusively on his writings and especially on those concerned with Stoicism and endorsing the «Stoic suicide therapy», and on a paper read at the World Congress of Philosophy four years before his death, that Xenakis' «splitting» of his own free will must be seen as the most telling confirmation of the Stoic (and his own) sense of freedom as «an excluder», as liberation<sup>28</sup>—not as utopianism. Xenakis attained the Stoic ideal of the free man. He died «rationally» and in accordance with his «idiosyncratic» reading of the Stoicism of Epictetus.

His philosophical interest centered upon Stoicism relatively late.<sup>29</sup> As it can be gathered from references in his writings,<sup>30</sup> he must have begun his philosophical

researches with Plato, to whom he repeatedly returned.<sup>31</sup> He gained philosophical maturity within the realm of the logical discipline of analytical philosophy, to which he made a considerable contribution with several short articles (of a destructively critical character) dealing with current moral, aesthetic and epistemological theories.<sup>32</sup> He considered himself a follower of the «ordinary language philosophy».<sup>33</sup> In his classes he taught almost all branches of ancient and modern philosophy with an emphasis on aesthetics, logic and linguistic philosophy.<sup>34</sup> At the same time he deeply admired Cynicism. This was «the most durable philosophical movement» for him.<sup>35</sup>

He greatly extolled the Cynical way of life as exemplified and revived by contemporary hippies. So much did the Cynic ideal appeal to him that he upheld that «the best ethics today happens among hippies (and relatives) rather than in philosophy departments».<sup>36</sup> Ancient Scepticism with its noncommittal attitudes also attracted him,<sup>37</sup> because of his anti-dogmatism and his avoidance of anything that could turn his self-dependence into ego-dependence.<sup>38</sup> Cyrenaic pessimism about the attainability of happiness and the Hegesian prompt resort to suicide also attracted him at times.<sup>39</sup>

Plato's Ethics» (*HTHr* 50, 1957, 67-70) one may assume that his Ph. D. Dissertation at Harvard University was on Plato. He mentions there as his «teachers» W. Jaeger, R. Demos, Cavarnos, Stampolis, J.L. Cook, D. Ross and other distinguished scholars.

31. The following articles of his are contributions to the Platonic studies: «Plato on Ethical Disagreement», *Phronesis* I (1955) 50-7, «Plato Watching a Farce», *South. Phil.* 4 (1955) 8-12, «Plato on Statement and Truth-Value», *Mind* (1957) 165-172, «Essence, Being and Fact in Plato», *Kantstudien* 49(1957) 167-181, «Plato's Theory of Forms», *Classica et Mediaevalia* 19 (1958) 1-6 and «Plato's 'Sophist'», *Phronesis* 43(1959) 29-43. He also wrote two articles with the same title on Aristotle: «Aristotle on Truth-Values in 1957/58».

32. I only mention some titles without detailed particulars: «Ordinary Language and Ordinary Beliefs» 1954, «Meaning» 1954, «The Logic of Proper Names» 1955, «Function and Meaning of Names», «Sentence and Statement», «Logic and Fiction» 1956, «A Mistaken Distinction in Ethical Theory», «Using Expressions» 1957, «God=Worshipped», «A Logical Consideration of Theism», «Deity-Value», «Logical Concepts and Psychology» 1958, «Sens du mot'doit' dans les *Principia* de Moore», «Ordinary Language Philosophy», «Art as Entertainment», «Art, Fiction and Beauty» (1959), «Subjects, Falsity, Commitment» (1963) and «Desuper-neralization» (1964).

33. Apart from relevant articles, there is an explicit statement of his in his article «Deity-Value», *Hilbert* II 56 (1958) 255-61.

34. This is assumed from his *Curriculum Vitae*. He has taught at Deree College (full professor); University of Alberta (Canada); Louisiana State University; McNeese State College; University of North Carolina; University of Maryland (Athens Campus).

35. See «Hippies and Cynics» *Inquiry* (1973) 1-15, also translated into Greek in the «Panderma Library», 1976, hence abbreviated into HC.

36. HC. 2f. Cf. *Epictetus* 14f, 119f.

37. See «Me» *Dialogist*, III n.2.Cf. «Stoic Suicide Therapy» (SSTh) *Sophia* 1972, I and «Non-Committal Philosophy», 1972.

38. See «Freedom and the Tourist Philosopher», *Proceedings XV World-Congress*, Sofia 1973, v. 4, 145-147. Self-dependence is the ideal of Stoic, Cynic and Sceptic philosophy.

39. He did not write anything on the subject but Hegesias is referred to in his *Epictetus* 19 and his articles on Hellenistic movements. In SSTh he has put Hegesias' alleged saying «Suicide is liberation» as motto.

25. *Ibid.*, 18: «[Epictetus] approves of suicide or death as a device for saving one's identity; for after all the reason one would rather die than lose his integrity or self-image is that such loss strikes him as unbearable».

26. The metaphor of «excessive smoke in the house» as a reason to depart is very dear to Epictetus: *Κατὸν πεποιθεὶν ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ; ἀν μέτρον μὲν ἂν λιαν ποίηται, ἐξέρχεται. Τοῦτον γὰρ μὲνίσθαι και κρατεῖν, ὅτι ἡ θύρα ἦνοικται.* (*Dis.* I 25, 18). Cf. I, 25, 20 and IV 10, 27: εἰ οὕτως τάλας εἶμι, λιμὴν τὸ ἀποθανεῖν. Οὗτος δ' ἐστὶν ὁ λιμὴν πάντων, ὁ θάνατος, αἴτη ἡ καταφυγή. Διὰ τοῦτο οὐδὲν τῶν ἐν τῷ βίῳ χυλεπὸν ἐστίν». Ὅταν θέλῃς, ἐξέλθετε καὶ οὐ καπιλή. The metaphor was also used with the same connotation by Marcus Aurelius (*Med.* 5, 29, 8, 47.10, 8).

27. This must be understood in terms of Epicurus' saying: Ὁ θάνατος οὐδὲν πρὸς ἡμᾶς (D.L.X 139), further explained in X 125: τὸ φρικωδέστατον οὐν τῶν κακῶν ὁ θάνατος οὐδὲν πρὸς ἡμᾶς, ἐπειδήπερ ὅταν μὴ ἡμεῖς ὦμεν, ὁ θάνατος οὐ παρῆστι· ὅταν δ' ὁ θάνατος παρῆ, τὸν ἡμεῖς οὐκ ὀμνῶν. Though not philosophically opposed to the right of practicing suicide in extreme cases, i.e. when one is actually a burden to himself and to others or in questions of honor, I think one should consider the matter as a social rather than as an individual being. Suicide as self-sacrifice should not be put under the same denominator, but only insofar as both are expressions of freedom.

28. On Xenakis' negative freedom as «an excluder» as liberation, in contrast to the existential (Sartrian) freedom as responsibility and in conformity with the Epictetean view of it as the state of being «unhindered, unconstrained, unfrustrated, unobessed, unneurotic» etc., see *Epictetus*, 15f, 87f. 122f. and *passim* as well as his essays, «Freedom and the Tourist Philosopher», «Hippies and Cynics» and «Free Will, a Negative Concept».

29. 1968 is the date of his important essay on Stoicism «Logical Topics in Epictetus» in *South Journ. of Phil.* 94-102. There follow *Epictetus, The Philosopher-Therapist* in 1969 and «Stoic Suicide Therapy» in *Sophia* (1972). Relatively late are also the essays «Hippies and Cynics» in 1972 and «Noncommittal Philosophy» in the same year concerned with Scepticism, Pyrrhonism in particular. Of the same spirit is the paper «Freedom and the Tourist Philosopher» inspired particularly by Epictetus and read at the XV World Congress of Philosophy in Bulgaria in 1973.

30. From his article «On the Theological Interpretation of

These interests were steps for Xenakis in his existential quest. Stoicism, particularly the Stoicism of Epictetus, almost totally absorbed his last philosophical investigations. Apart from some epistemological articles<sup>40</sup> most of his publications since 1968 were directly or indirectly imbued by Stoicism. It is highly probable that Xenakis resorted to Epictetus' «clinic» and surrendered himself to his drastic therapy after a personal experience which probably shocked him deeply.

Plato required that the attendants of philosophy attain a certain age. Physical and mental maturity is needed to grasp the meaning of the Stoic teaching. «Epictetus' students were not children... Going to school means being sick. If one is not in pain while there, he is wasting his time», Xenakis remarks.<sup>41</sup> Epictetus' means of therapy were too drastic for ordinary students, but Xenakis followed the course thoroughly. We see what these preventive techniques and remedial devices amounted to not only from Xenakis' «impressionistic» survey in his book on the philosopher,<sup>42</sup> but also from his essay on «Stoic Suicide Therapy». In this paper he mainly epitomizes the «credo» of his teacher concerning life and death (particularly self-inflicted death) as the ultimate expression of the most utopian freedom.

The views found in it are so close to his own (as revealed in the paper read at Varna in 1973) that there is not doubt either that Xenakis fully incorporated the Stoic teaching as he understood it, or that he devoted himself to Stoicism because he idiosyncratically shared the same views. Among his own ideas of life and freedom and «life in freedom» Xenakis echoes Epictetus' teaching on the self and its detachment from externals. Not all these presumably Epictetean ideas entirely coincide with those found in accounts of other scholars.<sup>43</sup> This does not mean that Xenakis biased the evidence, but that he read it in a personal way, which renders «his Epictetus» somewhat different from the one found in most orthodox interpretations.<sup>44</sup> It is true that Epictetus' views on suicide are in conformity with

the general Stoic tradition, though the issue is connected by him with the question of freedom. Epictetus' treatment of the subject appeared to Xenakis more important than the traditional Stoic discussions, because the lame freedman confronts it existentially and associates it with outlooks on life which have greatly impressed Xenakis, and which made suicide «inevitable». Yet Xenakis lays stress on the Stoic features—though with some Cynic shades—of Epictetus' theory and does not consider him to be at variance with orthodox Stoic teaching on this point.

In his haste to depart from life, however, Xenakis went beyond Epictetus and the other Stoics. In his striving after freedom he chose the most drastic of Epictetus' remedial devices, without heeding his master's advice to «delay when misfortune strikes».<sup>45</sup> Whereas Cleanthes and Epictetus' pupil Demonax are said to have died of their own free will after having lived almost a century, and Zeno and Antipater in old age—Seneca's suicide being imposed on him—Xenakis left in his early 50's, at about the age of Cato, the Stoic «martyr».<sup>46</sup> Despite the features our epoch shares with the Hellenistic era, it is more difficult to be a committed Stoic nowadays than in the distant past. The pitfalls in the way of freedom may be too numerous to overcome. Xenakis' obsession with Stoic suicide as therapy and ultimate expression of freedom, and his sharing Epictetus' general outlook on life suggests that his action be understood in terms of the Stoic «rational exit».

Although other Greek philosophers have not openly condemned suicide,<sup>47</sup> and the Cyrenaic Hegesias extolled it, the Stoics were the only ones to defend it on philosophical grounds as a rational deliverance and ultimate affirmation of freedom. The early Stoics moreover, Chrysippus in particular, claimed that it is the wise man and not the foolish who is entitled to extract himself from life rationally. Although this appears paradoxical at first sight, only the wise man's decision is *ipso facto* rational. Only he can judge whether his decision to depart, even if he is happy and

40. «Talking Entailment» «Truth - Functional Perturbations» (1969), «Natural Deduction Puzzle» (1975).

41. *Epictetus* 6. Cf. p. 74 and *Dis.* II 19, 29 and III 23, 30-32: «Men, the lecture-room of the philosopher is a hospital; you ought not to walk out of it in pleasure, but in pain. For you are not well when you come». Cf. *SSTH* 83.

42. See *Epictetus* 83.

43. Most scholars lay more emphasis on Epictetus' religious thought and spirituality. They also relate his passion for freedom to his having been born a slave, emancipated later by his master, which Xenakis does not see so important for his passion for freedom, since «he seldom uses the word in the political sense». The meaning of E's freedom is for him rather psychological (*op. cit.*, 16). His bibliography is greatly selective and consistent with the spirit of his own interpretation of Epictetus. This is also at variance with my appreciation of Epictetus' theological ideas found in a long chapter devoted to him in my book, *The Stoic Arguments for the Existence and the Providence of the Gods*, Athens 1976, 209-230, but I do not disagree with his basic assumptions, since he has looked at Epictetus from another angle.

44. For bibliography related to my point of view see my book, *op. cit.*, p. 300.

45. See *Epictetus* 83, 85 and *Epictetus' Manual* 20.

46. On Zeno's death see *SVF* I 6, on Cleanthes' I 474-476, and on Antipater's III Ant. 7. Cato died at about his fifties.

47. For Xenakis' survey on the attitudes of Greek and some modern philosophers on suicide (somewhat incomplete) see *SSTH*. The following may be briefly added: The Pythagoreans condemned suicide on strict religious grounds and Aristotle on religious and social. So did the Epicureans, but because they considered life worth living, since death meant absolute dissolution to them. Against suicide were also the Academics, Peripatetics and perhaps the Cyrenaics except Hegesias. Plato's stand is more ambivalent than as presented by Xenakis. Because he permitted it under extreme necessity. All other Greek philosophers and particularly the Stoics, Cynics and perhaps the Sceptics were favourable to it. The laws of ancient cities except Keos were repugnant to it. Suicide was practiced widely under the Roman Empire, mainly due to Stoic influence. Most modern thinkers, particularly John Donne, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Hume and many contemporaries, were not opposed to the exercise of the right of suicide. Among those who rejected it Schopenhauer is curiously the most prominent. The question is revived nowadays because of the discussions held on euthanasia.

virtuous, is correct.<sup>48</sup> The late Stoics extended this right to all men and Xenakis does not discriminate between the wise and the foolish, associating voluntary death with the question of freedom, on which the early Stoics did not lay particular emphasis.

He finds that most Greek philosophers (including Democritus and Socrates) have a positive attitude to suicide, considering the «negative» stand of Plato and Aristotle «atypical».<sup>49</sup> Like the late Stoics, he does not determine the particular cases in which suicide is permitted and justified.<sup>50</sup> In this he seems to have adopted the common late Stoic trend without the technicalities concerning the wise and the foolish, since later this distinction became weaker. The early Stoics must have related this distinction to the question of suicide under the influence especially of the Cyrenaics (better the adherents of Hegesias), parting company with the Cynics in this respect. As we know from Diogenes Laertius (II 95) the Hegesians held that it was more expedient for the foolish to go on living than to die, whereas for the wise, life was a matter of indifference. The Cynics, on the other hand, considered suicide the best alternative to an irrational course of life. This was consistent with their doctrine that death is totally indifferent to man, virtue being his end and freedom his ultimate good. As J.M. Rist<sup>51</sup> puts it, by their precept «either reason or the rope» the Cynics «are prepared to prescribe suicide, as a remedy for any kind of failure to live a rational life». And though permitting suicide even for trivial reasons and according to the moral character of the agent, the Cynics did not consider that it was the prerogative of the wise man to decide upon the rationality of the action, nor did they attach great importance to the matter. Xenakis did not lay emphasis on this differentiation between the Cynic and Stoic views, and, while finding acceptance of suicide consistent even with Scepticism, he regards the Stoics as pupils of the Cynics, even in his view of suicide as a fulfillment of the Cynico-Stoic sense of freedom as liberation from hindrance and constraint.

The justification of suicide—though not its extollation in Hegesias' way—constitutes at first sight one of the great paradoxes of Stoicism, apparently its most irreconcilable antinomy. Its acceptance seems inconsistent with some of the basic tenets of Stoic ethics such as the following: The primary inclination of a human being is its self-preservation. The end of life is hap-

piness, and living happily amounts to living in virtue and in accordance with nature and *logos*. But this is not the proper place to present or even summarize the basic Stoic ethical doctrine with its technicalities and its complicated theoretical basis.<sup>52</sup> It suffices to say that suicide is not required by such doctrines which believe that virtue consists of the exercise of reason, and it is unalienable by anything under the most adverse circumstances. Strictly speaking, natural evil, including pain, is either nonexistent or necessary for the exercise of virtue. This is basic tenet of Stoic theodicy (or cacodicy, as Xenakis preferred to call it).<sup>53</sup> Only vice is really bad, and only virtue morally good. And vice does not depend on externals, since no adversity can change the good disposition of the moral agent. Nothing can harm the wise man, because nothing can abate the strength of his soul (his *tonos*). Freedom is mainly internal, and this consists of assenting to events happening within the deterministic nexus of Stoic physics, and of not being compelled to follow them. On the higher level of Stoic ethics, people are either wise or foolish. But in actual fact the Stoic sage was never found. The extreme application of the basic Stoic aphorism «bear and forbear» renders all external adversities meaningless, and the fundamentally Stoic dispositions of unperturbedness<sup>54</sup> (*ataraxia*) and unfazedness (*apatheia*) make the Stoic invulnerable to disturbance and pressure. On the other hand, his continuous training to eradicate or at least to alleviate passion makes the Stoic master of his emotions and thus independent of all circumstances. Suicide, therefore, should have found no place within the realm of appropriate and inappropriate acts.<sup>55</sup> It seems superfluous in Stoic ethics, which is not so much an ethics of «resignation» but of joyful subjection to the universal Law of Nature, which is a better arbitrator than individual laws and wills.

It is not strange, therefore, that most of our evidence about the early Stoic theory of suicide has come down to us from opponents of Stoicism such as Plutarch (*l'adversaire privilégié* of the Stoics)<sup>56</sup> and the Aristotelian commentator Alexander of Aphrodisias. Plutarch criticizes the Stoic views destructively in his treatises *De stoicorum repugnantiis* and *De communibus notitiis* on the ground that they

52. For an excellent modern survey of Stoic ethics see A.A. Long, *op. cit.*, 179-209. For a good placement of the question of suicide in the realm of the Stoic discussions of duties see Bonhöffer, *op. cit.*, 188-193.

53. *Epicetetus* 46f. He says: «I coined the expressions cacodicy (justification of evil) and algodicy (justification of suffering and pain) because «theodicy», the usual word employed in connection with the problem of evil is absurd if «god» is at the same time defined as perfect or even as good». Anyway Xenakis does not find the Stoic, even Epicetetus', «cacodicy» entirely satisfactory.

54. These are Xenakis' renderings for the Greek terms. His interpretation of these Stoic virtues is very much in accordance with the Stoic spirit. See *Epicetetus* 81.

55. But as a matter of fact the whole question is placed in this realm. See *SVF* III 763 and Bonhöffer *op. cit.*, 188.

56. Plutarch has been so characterized by D. Babut, *Plutarque et les Stoiciens*, Paris 1971.

48. See *SVF* III 758-759.

49. «SST» 79. It is true that Socrates' death was early considered a heroic suicide and Cato died reading Plato's *Phaedo*.

50. The main circumstances under which suicide was permitted by the early Stoics were the following: For the sake of one's country and friends and under hard pain, amputation and incurable disease (*SVF* III 757). Cf. *SVF* III 768, where the five ways of «rational deliverance» are presented in a metaphorical language: Life is like a banquet and there are so many ways of reasonable voluntary death as there are reasons for interrupting the banquet; namely, great necessity (joyful sometimes), sudden presence of obscene talkers, unwholesome food, lack of food, and drunkenness with all their metaphorical and actual consequences.

51. *Op. cit.* p. 237. Cf. pp. 238-239 and D.L. VI 24;86.

discuss the appropriateness to stay in life or depart from it not in terms of what is morally good or bad, but in relation to the class of «intermediate» things in reference to nature.<sup>57</sup> He finds fault with Chrysippus' insistence on the wise man's duty to depart from life (for all his happiness and security) and the fool's to remain alive, even if there is no hope for the latter to acquire wisdom, as well as his view that moral virtue and vice have nothing to do with life itself.<sup>58</sup> Alexander of Aphrodisias sees a contradiction in the sage's decision to die of his own free will and the Stoic doctrine of the self-sufficiency of virtue and its unalienability by any lack of natural disadvantages.<sup>59</sup> Cicero, as a Platonist, may be included among them since the Platonic attitude to suicide is different. According to it man as a possession of God does not have the right to escape except by a divine signal, or under extreme necessity, a stand, however, which the early Stoics also adopted<sup>60</sup> and Epictetus regards as the morally justifiable sort of suicide *par excellence*.<sup>61</sup> Yet Cicero is impartial and in his sole piece of evidence on the matter he gives us the best Stoic explanation why it is appropriate for the sage to depart from life even when his virtue is not threatened and he is still happy and serene.<sup>62</sup> He relates the subject with the whole question of «duties» and the subclass of the second-level goods, i.e., those which are said to be «in accordance with nature» but not strictly within the moral sphere, though the wise man's act to leave life is *ipso facto* a moral choice, provided that his act is «timely» behavior.<sup>63</sup> Because «many of the things which accord with human nature are not unconditionally appropriate», and thus «suicide is an extreme example of conduct inimical to a man's own interests in most circumstances which might be rationally defended in certain situations».<sup>64</sup>

In less technical terms, the Stoic theory of suicide may be explained (though not completely justified) on the grounds of the evaluation of life and death in themselves within the general Stoic theory of value, which the opponents of Stoicism could not always grasp. Both taken in themselves were considered by the Stoics as morally indifferent. As Xenakis remarks, «it is the use made of life, not life as such that matters».<sup>65</sup> What is important in questions of life and death

is the moral disposition, intention and character of the agent (his *προαίρεσις*), his moral purpose of inner self, to speak in the language of Epictetus. The inner motive is quite different in the wise and in the ordinary man (or the fool in the early Stoic sense) and this explains the justification of the decision and the act of the former but not of the latter.

As long as external circumstances do not threaten the human moral purpose and as long as life is consistent with reason, though indifferent in itself, it is still preferable to death. It has value, is naturally advantageous and is to be selected and preferred to its opposite. Thus it is appropriate for man to enjoy it. But when life ceases to be «natural» and even before it becomes «unnatural», it turns out to be an *ἀποπροηγμένον*, deprived of any intrinsic value; and to depart from it is not merely appropriate, a *καθήκον*, but a «perfectly appropriate act» a real *κατόρθωμα*. When man is brought to the point to groan within himself, death is no longer a matter of indifference; it is to be actively preferred to life. As soon as vice threatens one's moral purpose, one may escape, «not so much forced by external circumstances, but by moral virtue itself». Because of the «indifference» of life and death in themselves, freedom, dignity, pride and character, which are indisputable values, are placed on a higher level than simple life and longevity.

The right to judge the appropriateness of the last action is further extended by the late Stoics to ordinary men, and is no longer the prerogative of the wise man, «who was rarer than the mythological phoenix».<sup>66</sup> Some criterion is still necessary, however, in order to determine whether circumstances impose voluntary departure and at the same time to justify the rationality of the action. Wisdom constituted such a criterion for the early Stoics but it is generally considered insufficient. Its formality and vagueness is regarded as the weakest point of the Stoic theory of suicide, because it may be offered as an excuse for unjustifiable deaths. In discussing intolerable pain as an excuse for suicide, Rist soundly asks: «Does not the possibility of committing suicide because of pain make it likely that many men, i.e. not only the wise but even the foolish, would feel justified in killing themselves on occasion when the wise would think it right to survive?»<sup>67</sup> This ambiguity of the criterion as far as the degree of adversity that would impel one to suicide is concerned, made Bonhöffer<sup>68</sup> condemn the Stoic suicide theory as failing to unequivocally determine the point to which external necessity is unbearable, even if it was stated that it is only under the most difficult circumstances that the right to depart willingly might be granted.

For all these deficiencies and objections pointed out even by ancient critics and philosophical rivals of

57. See *SVF* III 759-760: It is the case of the *μέσα κατὰ φύσιν*, which are neither morally good nor wrong.

58. *De comm. not.* cp. 11 p. 1063d (*SVF* III 759). Cf. *SVF* III 761-762.

59. *SVF* III 764; 766-767.

60. Zeno's suicide was explained as obedience to a sign given by god. See Rist, *op. cit.*, 234-236 and 242 on Zeno's death.

61. See Rist, *op. cit.*, 252; Bonhöffer, *op. cit.*, 30. But Xenakis, *Epictetus* 19, considers Zeus' permission a «mere formality». Cf. *Dis. I* 9 16; III 13, 14.

62. *De finibus* III 18, 60 (*SVF* III 763).

63. «Et saepe officium est sapientis desistere a vita, cum sit beatissimus, si id *opportune* facere possit. Sic enim censent, opportunitatis esse beate vivere, quod est convenienter naturae vivere» (*SVF* III 763).

64. A.A. Long, *op. cit.*, 206.

65. *Epictetus* 19. Actually this is the view of Epictetus, *Dis. II* 6, 1f.

66. The wise man was an ideal rather than an actual man. See *SVF* III 662:668. From the Middle Stoa onwards it was spoken of «progressing towards virtue» and not so much of the polar distinction between the wise and the fool.

67. *Op. cit.*, 239.

68. *Op. cit.*, 192-193.

Stoicism, the early Stoics elaborated a positive theory of suicide, consistent with the greater part of their ethical teaching, and most of them put the theory into practice themselves. This positive attitude the late Stoics defended more fervently, due to the greater instability and anxiety of the Roman age. And even if we are not in the position to speak of a general theory of suicide held unalterably by all Stoics, i.e. by Zeno down to Marcus Aurelius, nevertheless we can trace some common trends during the five centuries of Stoicism. Without placing suicide at the center of early Stoic ethics, there are some common features that testify to the unity of Stoic philosophical thought and its hellenic character: for the Jews condemned suicide on religious grounds. The matter is closely associated with freedom in late Stoicism as the expression and fulfillment of its most utopian form. But there is still differentiation among its representatives. Seneca extolls suicide as the unalienable right of self-disposal. He sings «pæans» to it and a certain *libido moriendi* is not alien to him. For him suicide is open to everyone, and, as Rist<sup>69</sup> puts it, «suicide itself makes a man free». He considers it «the ultimate means of salvation» and proclaims that «the highway to liberty is any vein in one's body».<sup>70</sup> He was, moreover, the single late Stoic who committed suicide (though forced by Nero, with the choice only of its means). M. Aurelius is also well disposed to suicide, but his attitude is ambivalent. He views the problem existentially. His «crisis of identity»<sup>71</sup> the strong sense of the Heraclitean flux dominating everything and making it unimportant betray a more emotional attitude on his part than the other Stoics'.

In spite of the shades of opinion held by the individual Stoics, because of their common positive attitude towards suicide, we may speak of life in the Stoic sense as a «being towards death» in an anti-Heideggerian spirit, i.e. not as a matter of ultimate concern, but as a matter of «indifference» always present in the Stoic's mind as a safety valve to liberation.

Xenakis, unlike Rist<sup>72</sup> and Bonhöffer,<sup>73</sup> has read an

unequivocal affirmation of suicide into Epictetus. He does not consider rational and moral only the cases in which a divine signal is implied. Such cases he finds unimportant and mere reminders of the Platonic inheritance because he believes God to be only a value ideal and a «systematically elusive concept» in him.<sup>74</sup> Though discussing Epictetus' views of divine providence and the signs of design in the world, he finds his arguments inconclusive and regards Zeus as inoperative in Epictetus' world-view, being thus at variance with the current orthodox interpretation. Xenakis belittles the importance of passages in which Epictetus appears to attempt to dissuade people from suicide,<sup>75</sup> paying particular attention to passages in which suicide is appreciated in terms of freedom, dignity and pride. As it is clear in his article on «Stoic Suicide Therapy» he deems Epictetus as the main representative of the positive Stoic stand on suicide, a role that Seneca was more entitled to play. For all his scholarly objectivity and his reliable, though somewhat «impressionistic», interpretation of Epictetus, he sometimes projects his own ideas into him. Not only has he presented Epictetus as an «apostle»<sup>76</sup> of freedom, in his own sense of it as liberation, but also a most fervent defender of suicide.

Epictetus' enthusiasm for freedom, attested by the extensive use of the word in Arrian's report of the *Discourses*,<sup>77</sup> as well as his anti-existentialist notion of it, may have been the main reason why he had so strong an appeal to Xenakis as to have him attribute ideas to the philosopher more radical than he in fact had. As far as we know only Xenakis denied the theonomic character of Epictetus' ethics, arguing that his ethics can stand without the belief in God and placing little weight on his theological conception of the universe.<sup>78</sup> But apart from their common obsession with freedom Xenakis had further reasons for singling out Epictetus and becoming a devoted student of his. Epictetus much more than the other late Stoics, who were mostly ethically minded, still had interest in logical theory. And Xenakis was perfectly equipped to tackle the technical Stoic logic. Epictetus was also the only professional teacher among his nearly contemporary Stoics, following the example of his teacher Musonius. Xenakis found in him a teacher, like himself, occupied with philosophy as a therapy, considering the phi-

ces to suicide on which an objective account could be based are the following: *Dis.* I 2.3-9 J 1; 9, 16; 9, 20; 24, 20; 25, 18; II 1, 20; 15, 4-8; 23, 16; III 8, 6; 13, 14; 22, 34; 24, 105; IV 1, 20; 171; 10, 27.

69. *Op. cit.*, 248. For a brief survey of Seneca's views see pp. 246-250. For references see A.L. Motto, *Seneca Source-Book: Guide to the Thought of L.A. Seneca* (Amsterdam 1970) p. 207.

Suicide is regarded by him as the best thing eternal law ever ordained, as a pathway to freedom, and every man's right. The circumstances under which it is justified amount to those described by the early Stoics and he considers some cases when it is unjustifiable. *Ep.* 17 is a good evidence for his defense of it. Cf. *De ira* 3.15.4.

70. See Rist, *op. cit.*, 249.

71. The expression belongs to Dodds, cited by Rist, *op. cit.*, 286. Cf. *Med.* 10.32; 11.3; 10.8; 8.47 etc.

72. *Op. cit.*, 250-252. Rist sees «the pendulum swung back» with him, considering Epictetus' views more traditional than Seneca's and less favorable to unconditional suicide. But perhaps Rist has overtoned Seneca's «libido moriendi».

73. *Op. cit.* 29-39. He classifies E.'s views in three classes: moral, immoral and what could be called «amoral». Among the first are those implying a divine sign and to the third belong instances of pride and honor. These three classes are further (pp. 38-39) divided into seven. Anyway, Epictetus' more important referen-

74. *Epictetus* 19, 56. Cf. S5TH 74-76.

75. *Dis.* I 9 16; II 15, 4-8.

76. See C. Despotopoulos, «Introduction to the translation of a selection of Epictetus' *Manuals*, *Ἐποχές* I (May, 1963): 85-90.

77. «I know no man upon whose lips the idea (of freedom) more frequently occurs. The word «free» (adjective and verb) and «freedom» appear some 130 times in Epictetus, that is, with a relative frequency about six times that of their occurrence in the New Testament and twice that of their occurrence in Marcus Aurelius» (W. A. Oldfather, *Epictetus, The Discourses*, London 1961, XVII). Cf. Xenakis, *Epictetus* 16.

78. *Epictetus* 13, 46, 56, 58.

losophical school as a clinic and himself as a philosopher-therapist with a drastic course of healing.<sup>79</sup> Both paid greater attention to negative than to «straight» ethics, coping with fighting pain, which they saw as a continuous threat to life, either by preventing its appearance, or by alleviating it, or by escaping from it through a drastic therapeutic device. He believed Epictetus' methods of therapy, such as «existential therapy» and «logotherapy», greatly effective in modern psychological and psychiatric techniques,<sup>80</sup> and his negative «analytical»<sup>81</sup> ethics more timely than many modern normative and meta-ethical theories. He found or thought he found in him views on life which rendered suicide inevitable. For if there is no escape and life is a prison, no eudaemonistic outlook or optimistic mood can be retained.<sup>82</sup>

His personal views of life, revealed in his last but one public paper,<sup>83</sup> fully coincide with Epictetus' attitude towards it. They use the same metaphors to express its playful, nonserious and nonsacred character. Epictetus' refrain that life is a game becomes a leit-motiv of his. Not only is life a game but «the greatest game, greater than the pancratium and wrestling and all other Olympic games, for its trophy (happiness) is the greatest».<sup>84</sup> It is a «play» for «boys» with not enough winners. As soon as the rules are broken, the game is over and the playmates can «depart». Life is fun, a great joke, as the Cynics also maintained. And in fun there is always escape; for otherwise there would be no fun. Life is a guesthouse, a motel, in which you lodge for one night, without caring whether it is comfortable or boring. Life is a campaign, a military service, with everyday issues uncertain. Provisions are not needed when one travels light. Life is an excursion with little luggage and many unforeseen events. It is a banquet which may be interrupted for several reasons.<sup>85</sup> It is a stage; you need only play well the role assigned to you. It is a dance. You can tire of it. Life is like attending a fair; there are many distractions, yet it is worthwhile. Life is a mission. You should do your best as far as it goes. And finally life is travel,<sup>86</sup> without binding commitments, without

heavy baggage, without deep roots. There is always a stop and the «the door is open» if it grows wearisome.<sup>87</sup>

With little textual support Xenakis read into Epictetus his own convictions of the endorsement of euthanasia,<sup>88</sup> considering it a great benefit for mankind. He also felt he shared the sentiment voiced by Epicurus that «death is nothing to us». He found incorporated into his neo-Stoicism much of the Cynic ideal but in a different way than it had been embodied by Zeno. They both shared the Cynic simple, abstemious and unaffected life and admired the Cynic heroes Hercules, Socrates and Diogenes.

Xenakis had in common with Epictetus the same «thin» conception of the self, by limiting the self's boundaries to his own doctrines (his προαίρεσις) and not making it depend upon the opinions of others. He also tried to make his «self» unaffected by strong emotions involving bonds with persons and external things. For such commitments constitute a continuous threat of the «smooth flow» of life.<sup>89</sup> The distinction between «me» and «mine» is of extreme importance to both philosophers;<sup>90</sup> even if «me» amounts in Epictetus to «the use of presentations»<sup>91</sup> and in Xenakis to the inner core of the self which is «guts freedom». A freedom unaccompanied however by its existentialist corollaries such as nausea, despair, desertion.<sup>92</sup>

Xenakis was especially fascinated by Epictetus because, as I have said, he was first and foremost a teacher, according to his own conception of «teaching» philosophy. And it is significant that the temptation of the open door allured him when he was on holidays, i.e., away from his pupils whose mere presence could have dispersed «the smoke from the house» for another time.

For all his interest in logic, the part of Epictetus' philosophy which mostly appealed to him was ethics. Unlike conventional treatments of Epictetus' ethical theory, such as Bonhöffer's, with the traditional clarification of the Stoic ethical terms, Xenakis classified Epictetus' ethics according to his personal conception of his philosophy as a therapy and considered its negative aspect more important

79. *Op. cit.*, 6, 74.

80. *Ibid.*, 127, as exercised by Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, New York 1963 and Ellis, *Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy*, 1963, in his «rational therapy».

81. *Ibid.* 7, 20: «Epictetus' ethics is largely analysis and clarification rather than exhortation to virtue».

82. *Ibid.*, 16ff, 86: «...that life is not cozy...need not be pessimism; it could be realism...». Cf. 41: «Eudaemonism and pain-oriented ethics are implied in the derivation of the ethics from the concept of value».

83. «Freedom and the Tourist Philosopher», *Proceedings of the XV World Congress of Philosophy*, Sofia 1973, v. 4, pp. 145-47.

84. *Dis.* III 25, 3; I 24, 20. Cf. *Epictetus* 14, 21, 84, HC 10-14, SSTh 86. Yet there is no competitive character in this double metaphor «behind which is suicide, no less».

85. Cf. *SVF* III 768. Most of these metaphors occur in the *Manual* 11, 12, 14, 15 and in *Dis.*, III 9, 22, 19, 4-6; 24, 53; IV, 7, 22-4; II 16, 37; 5, 17; I 24, 20; II 5, 18-21; 14, 24; IV 1, 104-9; 4, 24-7; 7, 19; I 12, 21; 25.

86. *Dis.* I 4, 18; 22-23; III 21, 9; III 22, 23. III 24, 4, where the words ἀποδημητικός, ἐρφίδιον etc. occur.

87. *Dis.* IV 1, 2; IV 10, 27; I 25, 18; II 1, 20; III 8,6; III 22, 34; III 24, 105.

88. As in Seneca, *De ira* I 15, 2. Cf. *Dis.* II 15, 4-8 and the athlete's incident. See *Epictetus* 17f.

89. *Εἰρῶνα βίου, τὸ εὖροπον* (early Stoic terms) are often used by Epictetus to denote the unhindered course of life and freedom from pain and fear. See *Epictetus* 89, SSTh, HC and FTh. Cf. *Dis.* I 4, 1-2 and III 2, 9-13. For an Heraclitean diagnosis of the self and the emergence of self and freedom see *Epictetus* 101 and *passim*.

90. *Dis.* I 1, 12; 15; M., 9, 2; For Xenakis self=freedom, for Epictetus προαίρεσις (which is always free). See FTh 146, *Epictetus* 90 f.

91. *Dis.* I 1, 6; 12; III 27, 67-90; I 20, 16. Xenakis speaks of a «noogenic principle».

92. He often speaks of the «existential melodrama» as committing the noogenic fallacy. For a detailed comparison of the Stoic with his own negative sense of freedom and the unwanted freedom of Sartre's existentialism, see FTh 145-146 and *Epictetus* 129ff.



philosophically (not only historically) and more timely in reference to modern needs.

He concentrated upon ethics because he considered it to be Epictetus' «dominant interest» and because he had not found «his diagnosis of problems in living and techniques for coping with them sufficiently appreciated».<sup>93</sup> He regarded Epictetus' ethics as «primarily pain oriented» and consisting of «existential reminders, such as that things are ephemeral and people vulnerable, plus ways of avoiding and easing distress, including training and thought analysis».<sup>94</sup> He saw Epictetus more interested in individual than socio-political ethics and the former more «pain» than «happiness-oriented». He divided them into «preventive» (teaching for anticipating ills) and «remedial» (techniques for alleviating and rectifying ills). Suicide is included among the latter as the most drastic remedy when all else failed.<sup>95</sup>

The degree to which he assimilated Epictetus' teaching is obvious if one compares the epilogue of his essay «Stoic Suicide Therapy», summarizing the presumed Epictetean views, with the last lines of his paper read at the Congress. The epilogue of the essay can be seen as Epictetus' last command to Xenakis. It runs as follows: «Thus if you get into a crippling car smash and no longer enjoy tennis and other things, use the extra time and energy on your writing and so get more pleasure out of life, because of this concentration and accident—adding perhaps 'it was meant' (therapeutic preordination). Or split».<sup>96</sup>

Xenakis seems to have followed the first part of his teacher's command for many years, making a considerable contribution to philosophy with his monograph on Epictetus—the only «book-length study on him» in English-speaking literature, as he remarks—, and many important articles published in the best philosophical periodicals throughout the world. In these he tried to establish a philosophical terminology derived from Greek roots<sup>97</sup> which is worthwhile to be studied and perhaps used. And there came a time when he judged it timely and rational to comply with the last part of his teacher's precept: to see the door wide open and make the decisive leap as if ready from long ago.

The degree to which he was prepared to depart is manifest in his own commandment to himself in the epilogue of his paper on «Freedom and the Tourist Philosopher». Summing up in it the «tourist outlook on life» he gives «a sketch of a possibility, not a categorical imperative» which runs as follows: «Live and let live. Do your thing. Travel light, *live* light, for sooner or later everything flips (save that). Have only weekend relations. Don't accumulate, improvise instead, *so you can flee at a moment's notice*. Be a life

visitor, not a junk collector, a capitalist—unless maybe you are another Seneca, the Stoic self-made millionaire who had things but was not had by them. The idea being anyway that what counts in the end is not how many things you have, but how much of your heart you put into them. How you feel when they are gone. Be easy going. Love them and *leave* them».<sup>98</sup>

This is the «credo» of a «passerby» of life «like crows and ravens». People, according to him, won't be «possessive or possessed by possessions». They should «rotate, not be rooted in the soil like plants». This was his preparedness: to leave «at a moment's notice», still laughing and before sighing.

Plato said in the *Phaedrus* (69c): «*ναρθηκοφόροι μὲν πολλοί, βάρκοι δὲ παῦροι*». I say: «There are many historians of Stoicism but very few genuine Stoics».<sup>99</sup> Among the latter, the first and perhaps one of the last was J. Xenakis. Not only was he a remarkable scholar on Stoicism but a real adherent of the Stoic teaching. The Stoic way of life, no less than Stoic philosophy, appealed to him greatly. His Stoic death put its stamp on a life imbued with the most intimate Stoic beliefs. The fact that he became involved with Stoicism comparatively late and after a distinguished career as an analytical philosopher helped him to grasp the real core of Stoicism and bring it to life. His knowledge of Existentialism, on the other hand, enabled him to treat Stoicism with an emotional sensitivity and to understand and better appreciate the Stoic concept of freedom from comparison with the Sartrean view of it. He said: «In his nonfatalist moods Epictetus allows for more freedom than even existentialism does. Absurdity, anguish, nausea, abandonment, despair, he would say, are not necessary».<sup>100</sup> The fact that he must have discovered Stoicism after a painful personal experience made him see in it a harbor and a clinic and appreciate its teaching in a thoroughly different way than scholars who, while conscientious, were essentially unaffected by it. Having taught and written on ethical theories, he was able to grasp and show these features of Stoic ethics which are philosophically important far beyond the age for which they were first formulated, features which can render Stoicism a living philosophy today.

His Neo-Stoicism is closer to the attitudes of life presented in Kazantzakis' *Zorba the Greek* and in Camus' *The Stranger*—in both of whom he sees the influence of Epictetus<sup>101</sup>—than to the religious and humanistic Neo-Stoicism of Justus Lipsius, Descartes,

98. FTPh 147. He does not fail to mention Epictetus and his metaphor «be a passerby of life» in this paper.

99. Xenakis had no pity against those «philosophers»—called by him «verbosophers» and «phony» philosophers who were not consistent with their teaching. By philosopher he meant purely one «who puts to use his valid opinions, who embodies a way of life, rather than [one] who can theorize about life». See *Epictetus* 76.

100. *Epictetus* 129. But his Stoicism has many existential elements such as: «self and freedom merge», «I am what I decide to be», «act determines character» etc. Yet he does not excuse existentialism for not defending suicide.

101. *Ibid.*, 10, 24: «If Stoic ethics means not resignation but nonchalance».

93. *Epictetus*, Preface p. IX.

94. *Ibid.*, 129-130, 83-85, 27, 7.

95. *Ibid.*, 84-85. Cp. SStH 82-84.

96. SStH 90 (indication of pages of this essay as in the Greek translation, which is not so good and renders proper names badly).

97. See e.g. telic, axic, criteric, thic, somatogenic, noogenic, protoconcept, cacodicy, algodicy, etc.

Spinoza, Pascal, Kant, the French philosophers of the 17th century and the English of the 18th, although Xenakis saw the role of Epictetus particularly prominent in these movements.<sup>102</sup> His Neo-Stoicism, on the other hand, is not orthodox Stoicism, but a peculiar eclecticism of Socraticism and most Socratic and Hellenistic currents such as Cynicism, Scepticism, Epicureanism and Cyrenaicism. He regarded Stoicism as an amalgam of heterogeneous elements.<sup>103</sup> Thus his Neo-Stoicism is a modern world- and life-view elaborated with the tools of analytical philosophy, seen under the needs of psychology and psychiatric researches, and experienced in an existential mood.

Stoicism, a philosophical system with serious interests in analysis and logic, gave Xenakis not only a model of life and death, but also a key to the solution of the main philosophical problem of our age. Stoicism, and particularly the Stoicism of Epictetus taught him that «the split in current philosophy between analysts and nonanalysts is unnecessary». He says: «Certainly it is not clear why a concern with language and concepts cannot combine with a concern with problems of life and death. Vested interests apart, only a narrow definition of philosophy or a superficial acquaintance with the powers of conceptual clarification prevents the analyst from appreciating what the existentialist or Marxist or anarchist is trying to do, or vice versa. Indeed, despite both camps, the results of

concept analysis is not just description and information, but change in one's outlook on life and language... Analytic and nonanalytic philosophy complement rather than compete with each other, the former by providing the latter with at least a tool, the latter by supplying the former with direction. Which shows too that they can coexist in the same thinker and moment of thought».<sup>104</sup>

It is a pity that his belief in the vitality of Stoic ethics did not make him invulnerable to the irrationality prevailing in our age and world. For he promised to offer much to philosophy by demythologizing it and bringing it again close to life. He believed that Stoic ethics is «the most binding moral framework the individual need live by».<sup>105</sup> And he claimed: «Epictetus' nonchemico-physical therapeutic techniques will be outmoded when (or if) anxiety, dejection, and the rest will all be erasable by means of an operation or shock treatment or electrical conditioning or a pill, etc... But meanwhile, at any rate, apparently his techniques still have some use, not to mention the fact that rational education, another characteristic feature of his thought, will stay with man as long as man is rational; for indeed the denial of this is self-contradictory».<sup>106</sup>

104. *Ibid.*, 130.

105. *Ibid.*, 126.

106. *Ibid.*, 42: «For Epictetus mental ethics appears to be more important than physical medicine». Cf. SStH, 86: «Even if chemico-physical tricks will one day totally eclipse, Cynic-Stoic therapy, its underlying philosophy of life and childrearing won't in the process be swept away; for only a cosmic upheaval can do that».

102. *Ibidem*. For modern Neo-Stoicism see Long, *op. cit.*, 237-241.

103. *Ibid.*, 4, 88, 102.