

Abstract

The Origin of the Cosmopolitanism: Political Philosophy of the Early Stoics

Ai KAWAMOTO

In this study, I reconstruct and analyze the political philosophy of the early Stoics, who are considered to be the founders of cosmopolitanism, to achieve the following two goals: 1. Clarifying the meaning of “cosmopolitanism,” which has been blurred in recent years, by reconstructing its original form; and 2. Providing some useful insights about the problems that contemporary cosmopolitans have been facing, especially how to understand relationships between individuals and particular communities.

Although the core idea of contemporary cosmopolitanism can be said to be that everyone is of the equal moral value and that every nation has a certain global responsibility, various types of “cosmopolitanism” have existed, which makes it difficult to identify its precise meaning.

Generally, contemporary concepts of cosmopolitanism are classified according to subject as “cosmopolitanism about justice” and “cosmopolitanism about culture and identity (and living well)”. For both of these types, the moderate and radical forms can be easily distinguished. This distinction lies in whether it holds a moderate view, in which the global human community is just one of many particular communities that give rise to moral responsibility, such as that for family and nation, or a radical view, in which moral responsibility to a particular community cannot be justified without appealing to the good of humanity as a whole. However, it can be said that radical cosmopolitanism has almost died out because of criticism that it transforms affection to a particular community into a mere tool for the good of humankind, and most cosmopolitans tend to avoid addressing the problem of how to understand affection to a particular community.

However, if this problem continues to be avoided, achieving global justice and promoting a model of living well in this globalized society, which are the most important tasks of contemporary cosmopolitanism, will be difficult. In my view, the early Stoics tried to change our understanding of the relationship between individuals and particular communities. Therefore, by examining the political philosophy of the Stoics, I hope to suggest a type of cosmopolitanism that can provide a foundation for global justice and suggest a model of living well while overcoming the difficulties associated with the radical form.

The political philosophy of the early Stoics remains a relatively undeveloped field of study, especially in Japan. Because it contains many unusual theses, such as “only the sages are citizens”, it has puzzled many interpreters. According to the standard interpretation, the early Stoics, Zenon as well as Chrysippus, excluded the non-sage (i.e., ordinary people) from ethical relationships; it was not until

the Roman Stoics that the ideas of universal norms and a community of all human beings were introduced. However, as I argue in this study, the political philosophy of the early Stoics needs to be reconsidered because the standard interpretation is grounded on a misunderstanding of the strange theses they proposed.

In Chapter 1, I refute the standard view that “the fool” is excluded from ethical relationships. “The fool” is considered someone who does not have systematic knowledge, not someone who cannot live a social life. The early Stoics argued that moral improvement was possible for the fool. As for the thesis, “only the sages are X (citizens, friends, etc.)”, by redefining political concepts, it aims not to exclude, but to encourage the fool to become a sage. In addition, I point out two things. First, the Stoic concept of *oikeiōsis* (appropriation or belonging) toward oneself also functioned as a basis of justice for others, while the concept of *oikeiōsis* toward others had probably already been developed by the early Stoics.

In Chapters 2 and 3, strange theories about the community of sages, which are characteristic of the early Stoics, are examined. Chapter 2 is devoted to Zenon’s thesis that only the sages are citizens. A survey of the surviving fragments of Zenon’s lost work, *Republic*, clarifies that he proposed an ideal community whose only citizens are sages. The main basis of the idea of the sage’s city is the redefinition of the law as virtue. The significance of this idea is that it aims to expand the relationship between citizens to all human beings, and that it demands us to love the rational capacity existing within a particular person. I also point out that the community of sages is considered an ideal model that should be held in the mind of every person.

Chapter 3 examines Chrysippus’ thesis that the universe (*cosmos*) as a whole is a city (*polis*). I argue that what Chrysippus means by this is that the universe is literally a community of sages. The bases of this strange thesis are the identification of the law with virtue, the sameness between divine and human virtue, and pantheistic cosmology. Its purpose is to reinforce the ideal of the community of sages by integrating it into the framework of physics. It also has some practical implications; for example, the abstract model of the community of sages obtains the physical reality of the universe and divine stars, as well as audiovisual images and musical rhythms owing to the traditional myth about the gods. Moreover, this thesis has a historical impact in that it holds that all humans belong, at least potentially, to a single community, despite the distances between one another, and share a reciprocal relationship, and that enables traditional communities (such as family and nation) to be maintained.

Chapter 4 explains the early Stoic theory about the structure and contents of universal law (called “common law” or “natural law”). As I show, contrary to the standard interpretation, the Stoics did not argue for the existence of such rules that prescribe appropriate actions (*kathēkon*) without referring to situations. Rather, they proposed rules that dictate what is appropriate by referring to type-situations. The Stoics also thought that these situation-sensitive rules should somehow be based on universal principles about things such as the gods and human nature. This Stoic normative theory is important

in that it argues for the existence of universal principles about significant things, while maintaining the need to consider particular situations. In this view, Stoic normative theory urges everyone to participate in making and implementing universal rules, and is therefore rather flexible.

Chapter 5 compares the early Stoics and the Roman Stoics, who developed several new theories. First, they regarded the community of humanity as parallel to traditional communities such as family and nation. Second, they considered the problem of what duty people have toward each parallel community. Third, they tried to justify duty to traditional communities by relating these communities to the right reason (*orthos logos*). These new theories are important because they clearly stated, for the first known time in the history of ideas, that all human beings comprise a single community—which is the core idea of contemporary cosmopolitanism—and suggested a cosmopolitanism that stressed community improvement.

The main conclusion of this study can be summarized as follows. In regard to justice, the Stoics argued that, to determine one's duty toward a particular community, universal principles must be referred to in at least two ways. First, on the assumption that a community governed by universal principles is the ideal model, duty toward a particular community should be determined based on that model. Second, duty toward a particular community needs to be justified by the fact that the reasoning about duty uses universal principles as premises.

Regarding the problems of identity and living well, the Stoics held that, in order to live well, people must consider themselves not only as personalities who belong to particular communities, where members share a particular culture and history (i.e., only as someone's wife, someone's friend, a citizen of a certain city, etc.), but also as members of a community of sages, whose members potentially include all human beings.

Therefore, Stoic cosmopolitanism does not consider one's ties with a particular community as a mere tool for the good of humankind; rather, it provides new insights into what it is like to be a world citizen. In other words, it consists of making relationships with people no matter who they are, holding the model of a community of sages and gods in one's mind, and living according to universal principles.