Cassius Dio and the Principate
edited by Christopher Burden-Strevens,
Jesper Majbom Madsen, Antonio Pistellato

The 'Age of Iron and Rust' in Cassius Dio's *Roman History*: Influences from Stoic Philosophy

Christopher Noe
Syddansk Universitet, Danmark

Abstract This paper discusses the impact of Stoic philosophy on Cassius Dio's imperial books of his *Roman History*. It is demonstrated how fundamental Stoic ideas influenced Dio's constitutional discussions and the role of the emperor as in the Agrippa-Maecenas debate in book 52, and how Dio evaluated political environments as well as political developments in the Empire with inspirations from Stoic logic. Moreover, this paper argues that the iron age in his contemporary narrative from the emperor Commodus to Caracalla is also fundamentally an iron age on the basis of Stoic values.

Keywords Stoicism. Virtue. Ideal emperor. Political structure. Iron age.

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Lexis Supplementi | Supplements 2
Studi di Letteratura Greca e Latina | Lexis Studies in Greek and Latin Literature 2
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-472-1 | ISBN [print] 978-88-6969-473-8

Peer review | Open access
Submitted 2020-09-08 | Accepted 2020-10-13 | Published

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-472-1/006

1 Introduction

Cassius Dio was a senator during a period of great changes in the Roman Empire. Power was centralized, and the traditional senatorial elite had long been put on the side lines.[1] He himself described the period as a change from the 'golden age' of Marcus Aurelius to the 'iron age' of Commodus that was followed by a deeply problematic Severan Dynasty.[2] From what perspective did Dio perceive the political system of which he was very much part? In this article I propose a new dimension to the reading of Dio's *History*. To get a better understanding of Dio's project, we need to develop a more detailed knowledge of the underlying philosophical ideas that direct his narrative. This article will be primarily concerned with Dio's contemporary narrative, but will also include perspectives from other parts of his *History* where appropriate. The main purpose of this article is to demonstrate that Dio's *History* was written with inspiration from Stoic philosophy that ultimately influenced his explanations of historical developments and his evaluation of historical characters. This will provide us with important information on how to understand Dio's mind, how he evaluated political issues, and what he saw as the reasons members of the elite acted in the way they did.

Since elements of Stoic philosophy were so prevalent among Rome's intellectual elite by the 3rd century CE, it is important to interrogate their possible impact on Dio's narrative. However, we cannot expect Dio to write in the style of Seneca in his essays or in the style of Marcus Aurelius in his diary. Dio was an historian, and this article presents an analysis of parts of his *History* that can be useful not only to understand Dio's work in its own right but also to understand how we can trace elements of Stoic philosophy in historiography, and how Stoic ideas could be used to discuss politics, politicians, and the course of history.

Some parts of this analysis could equally be evidence of a Platonic inspiration: some considerable overlaps may quite easily be found between these two leading ancient philosophies. Surely Dio could have been inspired by different philosophical schools, and the point is that we can learn a lot about the political elite of the 3rd century by trying to understand the philosophical basis of their political and historical arguments. This article does not present a full-scale argument of Dio's philosophy. It presents an analysis of some fundamental Stoic ideas which are traceable in his monumental work.

Although the majority of Dio's contemporary narrative survives in the epitomes of the Byzantine monk Xiphilinus, this fact does not

1 Noe 2019, 13 ff.

2 Cass. Dio 72[71].36.4.

militate against the analysis offered in the present article. Passages where we can compare Dio with Xiphilinus are quite close to each other. Besides this, Xiphilinus has a tendency to point out when he deviates from Dio's text.[3] Moreover, it is generally acknowledged that Xiphilinus' method seems to have been either to copy passages in Dio or to make summaries where he simplified the narrative and/or omitted passages that he thought unimportant, such as speeches.[4] Of course, this makes a complete analysis of Dio's narrative structure, his way of using speeches to discuss political and/or moral questions, and other such themes impossible, because these "unimportant" parts have simply not survived. But the basic point here is that the epitomes of Xiphilinus are fundamentally still Dio, albeit in an abbreviated form. We can, with reasonable safety, assume that the world-view and the narrative logic that are present in the books on the Severan period represent the thoughts of Dio, not of Xiphilinus.

Earlier scholarship on Dio focused on style, language, and structure.[5] The modern approach is rather different. Recently, many studies have approached Dio's *History* from a narratological perspective. This interest is also seen in relation to Dio's narrative of his own time (from the later part of Commodus to the reign of Alexander Severus). However, it has proven difficult to break some established paradigms. Seeing Dio as part of the traditional "senatorial tradition", where the ideals of the *civilis princeps* are the basic perspective to the narratives of the emperors, has been a dominant way of approaching his view of the Principate.[6] It has been noticed by Adler (2012) that Dio ideally believed that the emperor ought to be a wise man, although his ideal often approaches the utopian. Dio has, according to Adler, quite a pessimistic view on the leaders of state and on human nature in general.[7] Hence, Adler does not analyse how Dio sees the idea of

3 Xiphilinus mentions his lack of Dio as a source for the narrative about Antoninus Pius, see Cass. Dio 70.1.1; for an example of his deviation from Dio's analysis, see 72.9-10, and for the omission of details mentioned by Dio, see 78.6.1.

4 On the ordering of the work, see Barmann 1971, 59. On Xiphilinus' methods, see Millar 1964, 195-203; Barmann 1971, 60; Brunt 1980, 489-90; Mallan 2013, 610-19; 630-44.

5 See Andersen 1938, 49-64; Gabba 1959, 376-8; Fadinger 1969, 27-8; 334-6; Manuwald 1979, 6-12; 21-6; 275. Even Millar 1964, who claimed that he would make the first attempt to read Dio as a literary work, ended up concluding that Dio presented no larger interpretations (45) and had no underlying or governing view on history (76-7).

6 This view is to some degree present in Syme 1939, 313-30. For a more explicit placement of Dio within the *civilis princeps*-tradition, see De Blois 1994, 166-71, who explains these ideals as a blend between the Augustan "ideology" and traditional Greek ideals of the good ruler. See Adler 2012, 506-13 for a discussion of how Dio's book 52 as a whole advocates for the important blend between democracy and monarchy, which is the system favoured by the *civilis princeps*. For at general outline on the ideals of the *civilis princeps*, see Wallace-Hadrill 1982, 32 ff.

7 Adler 2012, 487-99.

the wise man in practice (or what happens when the emperor is not wise). The traditional view on Dio as a simple proponent of the *civilis princeps* has generated marked attention on the role of the senatorial elite in his political philosophy.[8]

Scholarship on Dio's own time has also begun to focus on narrative style and structure. Madsen (2016) argues that Dio was especially critical of family dynasties because such a system could not ensure that the best man be in power. Thus, to Dio the nomination or appointment of the ideal candidate by (and preferably from) the Senate presented the better system. Hence, the period of the adoptive emperors from Nerva to Marcus Aurelius is presented as a golden age, in which the political system is well-functioning with a series of competent emperors succeeding each other and where we find good collaboration between the emperor (who still has absolute power to ensure stability) and the Senate.[9] Dio is aware of the fact that the idea of a more powerful Senate was to some degree an illusion, but his point is that this system would be more honourable for the elite and would better ensure the stability of the system through time. Hence, one of the primary problems with Severus was that he gave sole power to his two incompetent sons.[10] Rantala (2016) also discusses Dio's contemporary narrative from a literary perspective. His main points are that Dio uses well-known formulas in order to create a simple story in which Severus is portrayed as a tyrant through his lack of *clementia*, through his use of the army as his power base, and through his idealization of Sulla.[11]

Although these studies have been important for establishing Dio's political ideals and for understanding how larger messages extend across his many books, much remains to be said. No attempt has yet been made to analyse Dio's underlying philosophical views in their entirety, although it has been recognised that Dio's political thought is inspired by Stoicism. Comments on Dio's relationship with Stoicism have tended to be casual and placed within broader discussions of Dio's style, general political views, or sources of inspiration.[12] In

8 Millar 1964, 122-3; Hekster 2002, 4-5.

9 Madsen 2016, 146-53.

10 Madsen 2016, 154-8.

11 Rantala 2016, 165-72.

12 See e.g. Gangloff (2018, 350) who identifies Stoic and Platonic logic in book 52, where Maecenas talks about the deification of emperors: Cass. Dio 52.35.5 Ἀρετὴ μὲν γὰρ ἰσοθέους πολλοὺς ποιεῖ, χειροτονητὸς δ᾽ οὐδεὶς πώποτε θεὸς ἐγένετο. See Fishwick 1990, 167-70 for a discussion of possible sources of inspiration from other authors for the whole 52.35 in Dio. However, his basic message is that in the speech of Maecenas, Dio draws heavily from familiar themes on traditional advice for supreme rulers (275). On this point he is closer to Millar 1964, who mostly presents anecdotal points about Dio's political views: Dio's political and philosophical ideas were standardized and

this article I aim at a deeper investigation on Dio's inspiration from Stoicism.

2 Stoicism as Political Ideology

In order to understand how Dio constructs his narratives upon a Stoic base, we should start by considering some key aspects of Stoic philosophy against which we can measure Dio's political thought. In order to clarify the components of Stoicism as a political ideology or as a philosophy that can be traced in a political and historical narrative, the Stoic conception of holistic interconnectivity is a good point of departure. There was a natural order, embracing the entire universe in its totality. The Stoics called it Nature, and the idea was to live in accordance with the laws of this universal order. With this holistic view of the interrelation of everything came the idea that each person had a specific role to play in society. The important thing here is that each person had his role and responsibilities according to his social, economic, and political status. So, the idea was that one was supposed to fulfil the role that had been given. If one happened to be a military general, how would he fulfil this role to the maximum societal benefit? If one happened to be emperor, how should he manage this responsibility in accordance with Nature?[13]

The Stoics thought man to be rational and capable of being educated to understand the ways of Nature. Therefore, they did not approve of harsh punishments as they perceived criminals as merely ignorant of Nature's laws. Rather, these men should be educated. Moreover, the Stoics thought that rulers had an obligation to treat subjects humanely.[14]

The education of a Stoic aimed to comprehend the order of Nature (and thereby to understand one's own place in the universe), and to create an impenetrable mind, so making one capable of always taking the right decision based on reason. Thus, courage and a stern mo-

more or less generalities about human nature. Millar does not engage in any coherent discussion of Dio's underlying philosophical views (72 ff). But he argues that Augustus' dialogue with Livia on the conspiracy of Cn. Cornelius Cinna Magnus (Cass. Dio 55.14-22) seems to be particularly inspired by Seneca's *De Clementia*, the main points being in line with Stoic ideas about mildness and clemency (78-9); on this point, see also Gangloff 2018, 383.

13 On the idea of a universal natural order, see e.g. Shaw 1985, 31-4. On the specific idea of everything's place in the universe as a whole, see Engberg-Pedersen 2017, 225-34; See also e.g. M. Aur. *Med*. 3.11; 4.40. On the specific role each individual is given see Shaw 1985, 34-37. He describes it as 'role play', and in this idea he sees a great deal of deliberate social differentiation.

14 Shaw 1985, 37-43.

rality were normal characteristics of the good man of strong mind.[15] Focus on morality and virtue was not exclusive to Stoics, but their strong emphasis on education, the fundamental other-relatedness of one's societal duties, and the ideal of the impenetrable mind, are specific and important Stoic ideas.

A final point to be mentioned is the Stoic's view on political organisation. They were not opponents of monarchy, nor were they against political authority in general. On the contrary, Stoics tended to see society as the natural arrangement of human beings and the state as nature's agent in providing all the necessities of a good life. However, they can be seen as opponents of the Aristotelian *polis*-community. The boundaries of the *polis* were not fitting to the Stoic idea of humans being 'inhabitants of the world' and so the Hellenistic kingdoms or the Roman Empire were actually more in line with their ideas of universal laws and universal citizenship.[16]

3 The Wise Man and the Ideal Politician

First, we need to embrace the concept of the Stoic wise man. This concept is critical to grasp in order to perceive the way in which Dio's judgement of emperors goes beyond the basic ideas of the *civilis princeps*. For this discussion we must go back to the first emperor, Augustus, and take a look at the only place where Dio really dwells on the ideological and philosophical foundations of the Principate: book 52. Here we also get the chance to read Dio's own words instead of the epitomes of Xiphilinus. Even though book 52 is primarily a discussion of constitutions and political arrangements, it does also address more philosophical topics. This discussion will be divided into two parts: 1) the character of the ideal politician, and 2) the role of the emperor in the Roman Empire.

To exemplify the Stoic ideal of the statesman, we may begin with the description of Cato the Younger in Lucan's *Pharsalia*, who is praised throughout the work and characterized as a true Stoic politician:[17]

Lucan, *Phars*. 2.388-91
Urbi pater est, Urbique maritus:
Iustitiae cultor, rigidi servator honesti:

15 On the special role given to wisdom as the sole true virtue, see Brunt 1975, 11; Engberg-Pedersen 2017, 115-24. For a comment on courage and stern morality, see Gangloff 2018, 330.

16 Shaw 1985, 28-30, 45-54. M. Aur. regularly expresses the idea of the state as a meaningful and natural arrangement for humans, see e.g. 4.3; 5.1; 5.16.

17 For a general introduction to Stoicism in *Pharsalia* see Colish 1985, 252-74.

> *In commune bonus: nullosque Catonis in actus*
> *Subrepsit partemque tulit sibi nata voluptas.*
>
> For Rome, he was father and husband, justice's keeper,
> Strict morality's champion, always upholding
> The common good. And into none of Cato's deeds
> Did there creep even a hint of selfish pleasure.[18]

Especially in the first part of Maecenas' monologue there are several examples that corresponds to this outline. Maecenas begins by addressing Octavian's duties:

> Cass. Dio 52.14.1 ὥστε εἴ τι κήδῃ τῆς πατρίδος, ὑπὲρ ἧς τοσούτους πολέμους πεπολέμηκας, ὑπὲρ ἧς καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἡδέως ἂν ἐπιδοίης, μεταρρύθμισον αὐτὴν καὶ κατακόσμησον πρὸς τὸ σωφρονέστερον.
>
> Hence, if you feel any concern at all for your country, for which you have fought so many wars and would so gladly give even your life, reorganize it yourself and regulate it in the direction of greater moderation.[19]

In this way Dio begins the speech of Maecenas with a reminder that Octavian fought the civil wars for the sake of the state. Here we see the Stoic idea that serving the state is a central part of a man's *virtus*. Furthermore, morality and moderation come into play here, which is also the case a little later:

> Cass. Dio 52.34.1 Πάνθ' ὅσα τοὺς ἀρχομένους καὶ φρονεῖν καὶ πράττειν βούλει, καὶ λέγε καὶ ποίει. οὕτω γὰρ ἂν μᾶλλον παιδεύσειας αὐτοὺς ἢ ταῖς ἐκ τῶν νόμων τιμωρίαις δειματώσεια.
>
> Whatever you wish your subjects to think and do, this you should always say and do yourself. In this way you will be educating them, rather than intimidating them through the punishments prescribed by the laws.

In the quote from *Pharsalia* we also see the emperor as a guardian of the Roman state. We get a clear sense of duty. The Stoics embraced the society as the entity towards which everything is directed. They discarded the idea that *gloria* was an object of one's political actions, as had been the case in the traditional Republican tradition. A quote from Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* represents their ideas:

18 Translation: Walters 2015.

19 Translations of Dio follow those of Cary 1914-1927 with some adjustments of my own.

> Cic. *Rep.* 6.16 *Iustitiam cole et pietatem, quae cum magna in parentibus et propinquis tum in patria maxima est; ea vita via est in caelum et in hunc coetum eorum, qui iam vixerunt et corpore laxati illum incolunt locum.*
>
> Love justice and duty, which are indeed strictly due to parents and kinsmen, but most of all to the fatherland. Such a life is the road to the skies, to that gathering of those who have completed their earthly lives and been relieved of the body.[20]

Hence, all one's actions as a politician should be judged according to whether one does something for the benefit of the state. Accordingly, to be emperor was a task only to be undertaken because one was suited to it, and did it as a duty rather than a source of personal gain. In a Stoic political discourse, we would expect to find a focus which is broadly societal in nature. Here, the senatorial ideal of a *civilis princeps* is too narrow. This sort of societal discourse is something we expect to find in Dio if he is in fact inspired by Stoic philosophy.

In regard to the emperor this logic also applies. The Stoics, as well as the Platonics, saw the mind as divided into three parts, where rationality is seen as the one that needs to control the larger part of the soul: lust. According to the Stoics, lust is really a destructive force. It is not in the interest of the organism to succumb to lustful actions. In Stoic philosophy this idea can be used to explain mechanisms within the state (just as Plato does in *The Republic*).[21] This fits well with the fact the Stoics had an idea of one *natural governing force*. Seneca describes it in these words:

> Sen. *Clem.* 1.4 *Ille est enim vinculum, per quod res publica cohaeret, ille spiritus vitalis, quem haec tot milia trahunt nihil ipsa per se futura nisi onus et praeda, si mens illa imperii subtrahatur.*
>
> For he is the bond by which the commonwealth is united, the breath of life which these many thousands draw, who in their own strength would be only a burden to themselves and the prey of others if the great mind of the empire should be withdrawn.
>
> Sen. *Clem.* 1.5 *Nam si* [...] *tu animus rei publicae tuae es, illa corpus tuum...*

20 Translation: Keyes 1928.

21 Engberg-Pedersen 2017, 106.

> For if [...] you [*scil.* Nero] are the soul of the state and the state your body...[22]

This is an organic view on the state, and this governs the general idea of the distinct *statio* of each individual; the specific role everyone needs to play in society in order to make the state function as an entity. These roles are of course given according to status, wealth, health, and talents.

So, if Dio is presenting a generally Stoic view on the emperor we would expect him to comment on exactly these ideas. He would not simply talk about the emperor as a *civilis princeps* who behaves humbly in public and treats the senators well. We would also expect him to emphasise that the emperor is a natural driving force and that his actions directly influence the whole of society. Moreover, we would expect some form of concrete examples of what the special *statio* of an emperor is.

In the first part of his speech, Maecenas encourages Octavian to embrace the full task of reforming society. Following this paragraph, a central theme is that Octavian should ensure to choose all important advisors himself, with whom he should take all decisions:

> Cass. Dio 52.14.3 τὴν διοίκησιν τῶν κοινῶν ἑαυτῷ τε καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις τοῖς ἀρίστοις προσθεῖναι, ἵνα βουλεύωσι μὲν οἱ φρονιμώτατοι, ἄρχωσι δὲ οἱ στρατηγικώτατοι, στρατεύωνται δὲ καὶ μισθοφορῶσιν οἵ τε ἰσχυρότατοι καὶ οἱ πενέστατοι.
>
> Place the management of public affairs in the hands of yourself and the other best citizens, to the end that the business of deliberation may be performed by the most prudent and that of ruling by those best fitted for command, while the work of serving in the army for pay is left to those who are strongest physically and most needy.

This passage is not only about the emperor's role in the state; it also expresses a logic that specific groups of the people have their right place doing specific tasks for the society – hence Octavian shall take the monarchical power because *he is the best suited* for that specific role. This logic continues in 52.15, where Maecenas explains that the introduction of a monarchy will be for the benefit of the state, the argument being that one cannot expect the people to be able to make up its mind about public affairs. So, if the state shall function properly, it must be the emperor and his advisors who take all decisions and appoint magistrates.[23] Only in this way can terrible political strife be avoided. In the rest of chapter 15 Dio presents the oth-

22 Translation: Basore 1928.

23 Cass. Dio 52.15.1-4.

er members of the elite (i.e. primarily senators) as insensible. These men have a lust for power and to fulfil this lust they spare no effort:

> Cass. Dio 52.15.5 ταῦτα γὰρ πᾶσα μὲν δημοκρατία ἔχει: οἱ γὰρ δυνατώτεροι, τῶν τε πρωτείων ὀρεγόμενοι καὶ τοὺς ἀσθενεστέρους μισθούμενοι, πάντα ἄνω καὶ κάτω φύρουσι.
>
> For these are the evils found in every democracy, – the more powerful men, namely, in reaching out after the primacy and hiring the weaker, turn everything upside down.

Dio's thinking here leans heavily towards both Platonic and Stoic philosophy. This idea is quite clearly working here in Dio's presentation of the relationship between the emperor and the rest of the elite: At the top we have a rational and wise emperor, the personified reason of the state, who rules because he is the only one competent enough to do so. The elite is a sort of representation of the lustful (and therefore anti-Stoic) part of the soul, and this part needs to be controlled to avoid damage to the community. In this way, Octavian is a prerequisite for a well-functioning society.[24]

What we have here is an historian with quite a sceptical view on the elite as a collective entity. Convinced that they ruin everything, Dio does not wish them to hold too much power. Later in this article we will see some concrete examples of this criticism of the Roman senatorial class.

4 The 'Age of Iron & Rust'

We now turn to Dio's contemporary narrative with the aim of understanding how Dio perceived the state of affairs of his own time. This discussion takes as its point of departure the dramatic opening passage he uses to stage the new regime:

> Cass. Dio 72[71].36.4 περὶ οὗ ἤδη ῥητέον, ἀπὸ χρυσῆς τε βασιλείας ἐς σιδηρᾶν καὶ κατιωμένην τῶν τε πραγμάτων τοῖς τότε Ῥωμαίοις καὶ ἡμῖν νῦν καταπεσούσης τῆς ἱστορίας.
>
> About this we must state that the history has fallen from a kingdom of gold to one of rusty iron – both for the Romans back then and for us now.[25]

24 Cass. Dio 52.18.4.

25 This translation is different from Cary's as I propose another interpretation (see footnote 31).

And so, the reign of Commodus is introduced. Dio uses this metaphor to characterize the importance of the change from the ideal Stoic emperor Marcus Aurelius to his son Commodus. Apparently, this marked the beginning of a drastic decline for the Roman state. Dio does not, however, explain this statement explicitly. What is it that becomes an era of iron and rust?

The metaphorical fall from an age of gold to one of iron is of course traceable back to Hesiod, and in poetry we also find it in the Augustan poet Ovid. Both employ the metaphor to describe how the generations of humans would gradually decay – from a golden generation to one of silver, followed by one of bronze until we reach the iron age, a time characterized by immorality and distress.[26] Whereas Hesiod and Ovid see a gradual descent towards the worse, Dio uses καταπεσούσης to describe a decline which should be understood as a sudden fall – underlined in the fact that it goes directly from gold to iron. Moreover, Hesiod and Ovid present this metaphor as completely detached from concrete ideas of specific societies and constitutions, whereas Dio uses it to describe a specific change in government. Although Bertrand (2015) is certainly correct in stating that Dio is the only historian we know of who uses this metaphor,[27] it seems likely that he followed an established tradition that goes back at least to the Neronian age. In the tragedy *Octavia* (of unknown authorship), Seneca is given a monologue where he talks about Nero's regime as an Iron Age – whereas the emperor himself described his Principate as a new golden one, as reflected in panegyrics to Nero at that time.[28]

Dio is, however, the only author known to have combined the Iron Age with rust.[29] He uses the participial form of κατιόομαι ("to become rusty") and in both Greek and Latin rust (Lat. *rubigo*) has a metaphorical undertone as a symbol of decay.[30] Hence, to combine iron with rust alludes to a state where everything further degenerates and decays as a result of insufficient care.

26 Hes. *Op.* 106-201; Ov. *Met.* 89-150.

27 Bertrand 2015, 165.

28 In Seneca's monologue the civilized, human race is far from being a golden one. Rather, civilization means abuse of nature, wars, jealousy, and gluttony. Nero's age marks the nadir of these immoral and godless times (Pseudo-Seneca, *Octavia*, 381-435); Kragelund 2016, 215; 228, 310-27, discusses how, in *Octavia*, Nero's Principate is presented as an Iron Age. For notions about Nero's proclamation of a Golden Age, see Champlin 1998, 105-6. On the panegyrics, see Champlin 2003, 276ff.

29 Also stated by Bertrand 2015, 165.

30 In the *Discourses* of Epictetus (Arr. *Epict.* 4.6.14) ἀλλ' ὡς ὁπλάρια ἀποκείμενα κατίωται καὶ οὐδὲ περιαρμόσαι μοι δύναται. In the late Roman writer Prudentius (Prudent. *Psych.* 1.105-06) *nec iam contenta piatum condere vaginae gladium, ne tecta rubigo occupet ablutum scabrosa sorde nitorem*.

Interestingly, even though Dio's metaphor seems to be focused on politics he does in fact direct his metaphor towards the conditions of the common people. This political change did also affect τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις. This is not a thoroughly elitist perspective. Finally, it must be stressed that nowhere does Dio indicate the ending of this Iron Age. He actually tells us so explicitly, but this does not appear in Cary's translation. To be precise, τοῖς τότε Ῥωμαίοις καὶ ἡμῖν νῦν καταπεσούσης τῆς ἱστορίας should be translated as "the history fell for the Romans back then and for us now", νῦν being in direct opposition to τότε, hence "back then and now".[31] This is the world we now turn to. It is like an organism that is rapidly decaying, and thereby affecting every living cell because its soul, the emperor, is not taking care of it.

It all started with Commodus. The lurid stories – many of them exaggerated – about Commodus' Principate are well known, but Dio offers one especially Stoic interpretation of the impact his (mis)rule had on the entire Roman people. Dio concludes the life of Pertinax as follows:

> Cass. Dio 74.10.3 οὕτω μὲν ὁ Περτίναξ ἐπιχειρήσας ἐν ὀλίγῳ πάντα ἀνακαλέσασθαι ἐτελεύτησεν, οὐδὲ ἔγνω καίπερ ἐμπειρότατος πραγμάτων ὤν, ὅτι ἀδύνατόν ἐστιν ἀθρόα τινὰ ἀσφαλῶς ἐπανορθοῦσθαι, ἀλλ᾽ εἴπερ τι ἄλλο, καὶ πολιτικὴ κατάστασις καὶ χρόνου καὶ σοφίας χρῄζει.
>
> Thus did Pertinax, who undertook to restore everything in a moment, come to his end. He failed to comprehend, though a man of wide practical experience, that one cannot with safety reform everything at once, and that the restoration of a state, in particular, requires both time and wisdom.

It was Pertinax who single-handedly had the task of restoring the state. Civil war was indeed the reason for this need of restoration in Dio's book 52, where Agrippa and Maecenas advised Octavian on the direction to follow after the victory in the civil wars. But Pertinax had been installed as emperor immediately after the murder of Commodus.[32] There was in fact no other reason for this need of restoration than Commodus' politics.

This work of restoration was linked to several elements, some of them easy to solve: He rehabilitated people who were unjustly killed

31 Cary's translation: "for our history now descends from a kingdom of gold to one of iron and rust, as affairs did for the Romans of that day". The French translation of Gros goes: "pour nous aujourd'hui, comme les affaires pour les Romains de ce temps, l'histoire est tombée d'un règne d'or dans un règne de fer et de rouille" (Didot 1870).

32 Cass. Dio 74.1f; Hdn. 2.1f.

by Commodus, and he gave them a worthy funeral.[33] Moreover, the political culture within the elite immediately improved. Allegorically Dio tells us how the esteemed senator Pompeianus had kept away from Rome during the reign of Commodus, excusing himself on account of his blindness, but when Pertinax became emperor Pompeianus returned and recovered his sight.[34] Unfortunately, the lack of discipline of the soldiers was also one of these tasks, and here Pertinax was unsuccessful. Dio's analysis is that Commodus had given the soldiers so much privilege and luxury, and so much freedom to plunder, that they could in no way accustom themselves to the orderly and moderate life under Pertinax.[35]

We are reminded of Seneca's image of the emperor as the soul of the state and the Stoics' idea of the rational part of the mind having to control the irrational elements. Here Dio shows us how this could look in a political system: if the irrational elements of the state (the citizens, soldiers etc.) are given free hands, they will get accustomed to all sorts of misbehaviour (because that is what irrational elements do). It is a destructive force, clearly shown here: A part of Commodus' heritage was an undisciplined and corrupted praetorian guard that made a full return to orderly conditions almost impossible. In this way, Pertinax is a tragic victim of the unhealthy state of affairs where the wrong people have for too long held too much power. Consequently, Pertinax immediately became unpopular amongst the praetorians when he proclaimed the beginning of more modest times. They stormed the palace and he was killed.[36]

To Dio this period was characterized by a kind of reversed order, where the senators are governed by the authority of the soldiers and where good ideals must yield to violence and licentiousness. The same reversed order is still found during the reign of Caracalla. In Dio's *History*, the welfare of the soldiers is the direct goal of Caracalla's monarchical power:

> Cass. Dio 78[77].3.1-2 ἐσελθὼν δὲ ἐς τὸ τεῖχος 'χαίρετε,' εἶπεν, 'ὦ ἄνδρες συστρατιῶται: καὶ γὰρ ἤδη ἔξεστί μοι εὐεργετεῖν ὑμᾶς.' καὶ πρὶν πάντα ἀκοῦσαι, ἐνέφραξέ σφων τὰ στόματα τοσαύταις καὶ τηλικαύταις ὑποσχέσεσιν ὥστε μήτ' ἐννοῆσαι μήτε φθέγξασθαί τι αὐτοὺς εὐσεβὲς δυνηθῆναι. 'εἷς' γὰρ ἔφησεν 'ἐξ ὑμῶν εἰμί, καὶ δι' ὑμᾶς μόνους ζῆν ἐθέλω, ἵν' ὑμῖν πολλὰ χαρίζωμαι: ὑμέτεροι γὰρ οἱ θησαυροὶ πάντες εἰσί'.

33 Cass. Dio 74.5.3.

34 Cass. Dio 74.3.2-3.

35 Cass. Dio 74.1.2-3; 74.8.1.

36 Cass. Dio 74.8-10.

> On entering the camp he exclaimed: "Rejoice, fellow-soldiers, for now I am in a position to do you favours". And before they heard the whole story he had stopped their mouths with so many and so great promises that they could neither think of nor say anything to show proper respect for the dead. "I am one of you", he said, "and it is because of you alone that I care to live, in order that I may confer upon you many favours; for all the treasuries are yours".

His father Septimius Severus' famous last words ("enrich the soldiers and scorn all other men") were certainly followed by Caracalla.[37] Here, Dio's narrative emphasises the soldiers as a group. He casts this fixation, like a shadow, over the rest of his narrative about Caracalla. Dio creates a world where Caracalla installed the soldiers as a governing organ within the state.[38] Dio delivers several examples of the emperor's squandering of money on the soldiers and their luxurious living.[39]

But besides these stories there is also a central Stoic point: one must read the whole of Dio's *History* to be able to fully grasp it. There seems to be a kind of symbiotic relationship between bad emperors and the army. The soldiers do not primarily appear in their proper role as keepers of peace and stability. Rather, they appear as a group serving to realize the wishes of the emperor. The army does not steer itself and Dio is quite explicit concerning the behaviour of the soldiers if they are not controlled by a good emperor. In Dio's narrative, the soldiers are basically driven by one single thing: the lust for money, which is, of course, a deeply un-stoic trait.

As an example, the soldiers saw no problem in Nero's participation in various artistic competitions in Greece. On the contrary, they continued praising him in the hope of receiving even more money.[40] It is precisely this soldierly lust that is the primary cause of the troubles in the year of the four emperors (i.e. 68-69 CE), where Dio stages Galba as the superior of the first three in terms of moral values.[41] But because the soldiers of Vitellus were not satisfied with what they were given by Galba, they shifted their loyalty and eventually brought Vitellius to power.[42] During the short reign of Vitellius Dio depicts the soldiers more frequently as a fundamentally immoral and criminal group.[43] In Dio's world, one can expect an immoral and brutal

37 The quote: Cass. Dio 77[76].15.2.

38 Cass. Dio 78[77].4.1[a].

39 See e.g. Cass. Dio 78[77].9.1-3; 10.1; 10.4; 13.6.

40 Cass. Dio 62[63].10.1-3.

41 Cass. Dio 63[64].2.1f.

42 Cass. Dio 63[64].4-5.1f.

43 Cass. Dio 64[65].4.4.

regime when the soldiers are given such powers as Caracalla gave them. In this way Dio tells us that Caracalla did not understand his responsibility as the leader of the state.

The Stoic focus on the responsibility of the emperor and the potentially immense impact his actions can have as sole ruler is underlined in a concluding passage from Dio's evaluation of Caracalla. What Dio wants to show is Caracalla's fundamental destruction of the Roman state:

> Cass. Dio 78[77].10.1-4 αὐτὸς δὲ τὰ χρήματα ἔς τε τοὺς στρατιώτας, ὡς ἔφαμεν, καὶ ἐς θηρία ἵππους τε ἐδαπάνα […] οὕτω δὲ παρὰ πάντα τὸν τῆς ἀρχῆς αὐτοῦ χρόνον πᾶσα ἡ γῆ ἡ ὑπακούουσα αὐτῷ ἐπορθήθη ὥστε τοὺς Ῥωμαίους ποτὲ ἐν ἱπποδρομίᾳ ἄλλα τε συμβοῆσαι καὶ ὅτι 'τοὺς ζῶντας ἀπολοῦμεν, ἵνα τοὺς τεθνεῶτας θάψωμεν.' καὶ γὰρ ἔλεγε πολλάκις ὅτι 'οὐδένα ἀνθρώπων πλὴν ἐμοῦ ἀργύριον ἔχειν δεῖ, ἵνα αὐτὸ τοῖς στρατιώταις χαρίζωμαι'.
>
> The emperor kept spending money upon the soldiers, as we have said, and on wild animals and horses. […] To such an extent was the entire world, so far as it owned his sway, devastated throughout his whole reign, that on one occasion the Romans at a horse-race shouted in unison this, among other things: "We shall do the living to death, that we may bury the dead". Indeed, he often used to say: "Nobody in the world should have money but me; and want it to bestow upon the soldiers".

5 The Strengthening of the Soul

A central idea of Stoic philosophy is the importance of strengthening the mind in order to cope with the vicissitudes of fortune. Throughout Stoic literature we learn how the mind can be taught to be able to resist unhealthy desires and feelings.[44] However, it is potentially weak and easily lead astray. Continuous training is needed. Seneca tells us the necessity of always navigating in a potentially corrupting world:

> Sen. *Ad Luc.* 7.6-7 *Subducendus populo est tener animus et parum tenax recti: facile transitur ad plures. Socrati et Catoni et Laelio excutere morem suum dissimilis multitudo potuisset: adeo nemo nostrum, qui cum maxime concinnamus ingenium, ferre impetum vitiorum tam magno comitatu venientium potest. Unum exemplum luxuriae aut avaritiae multum mali facit: convictor delicatus paul-*

44 See e.g. Sen. *Ep.* 2.1f; 80.1f; Sen. *Ira* 2.2-3; M. Aur. *Med.* 1.1; 2.1-12. On the ability to make the mind impenetrable see e.g. Engberg-Pedersen 2017, 142-5.

> *atim enervat et mollit, vicinus dives cupiditatem irritat, malignus comes quamvis candido et simplici rubiginem suam affricuit.*
>
> When a mind is impressionable and has none too firm a hold on what is right, it must be rescued from the crowd: it is so easy for it to go over to the majority. A Socrates, a Cato or a Laelius might have been shaken in his principles by a multitude of people different from himself: such is the measure of the inability of any of us, even as we perfect our personality's adjustment, to withstand the onset of vices when they come with such a mighty following. A single example of extravagance or greed does a lot of harm – an intimate who leads a pampered life gradually makes one soft and flabby; a wealthy neighbour provokes cravings in one; a companion with a malicious nature tends to rub off some of his rust even on someone of an innocent and open-hearted nature.[45]

Thus, it is important constantly to strengthen the soul, keeping it away from potentially corrupting forces and guiding the mind in the right direction. According to such a view, the mind will quickly fall into ruin if its psychagogical training is stopped. It will be an inevitable consequence of decadent behaviour that the mind slowly but steadily falls apart. From this perspective, human nature is weak. This fits with the general evaluation Dio gives of Commodus: the young emperor was not born wicked. But he was weak and not accustomed to hard work. His mind was not ready for the potentially unlimited pleasures that life as an emperor would give him, although he was well educated.[46] As soon as he ascended the throne he longed for the luxurious life in Rome. That made him gradually more and more indifferent to administrative duties and more inclined to succumb to the pleasures of life. His lack of engagement in stately affairs had a deep impact on Roman society. We have seen how this unfolds in the reign of Pertinax.

5.1 Pertinax

Dio's and Herodian's narratives about Pertinax underline the fact that the ideal of a *civilis princeps* was a firmly established one, and this is their basis of judgment on the emperors: Pertinax is described as 'δημοτικός', moderate, humble and moreover as liked among the senators.[47] Thus, on the surface, Dio and Herodian are close to each oth-

45 Translation: Campbell 2014.

46 Cass. Dio 73[72].1.1-2.

47 Cass. Dio 74.3.4; 74.5.1-2; Hdn. 2.1.9; 2.2.6; 2.4.1-3. The word δημοτικός is not easily translated, meaning 'democratic' in some sense, but is perhaps closer to the latin '*civilis*'.

er, but on occasions the Stoic mind of Dio becomes apparent. When talking about the imperial family, both authors tell us that Pertinax sent his son away from Rome and that he did not let him participate in the pompous life in the palace. The passage illustrates how a Stoic perspective will change the overall expression, so both passages are quoted at length:

> Cass. Dio 74.7.1-2 οὔτε δὲ τὴν γυναῖκα Αὐγουσταν οὔτε τὸν υἱὸν Καίσαρα, καίπερ ψηφισαμένων ἡμῶν, ποιῆσαι ἠθέλησεν, ἀλλ' ἑκάτερον ἰσχυρῶς διεκρούσατο, εἴτ' οὖν ὅτι μηδέπω τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐρριζώκει, εἴτε καὶ ὅτι ἐκείνην τε ἀκολασταίνουσαν οὐκ ἠβουλήθη τὸ τῆς Αὐγούστης ὄνομα μιᾶναι, καὶ τὸν υἱὸν παιδίον ἔτι ὄντα οὐκ ἠθέλησε, πρὶν παιδευθῆναι, τῷ τε ὄγκῳ καὶ τῇ ἐλπίδι τῇ ἐκ τοῦ ὀνόματος διαφθαρῆναι.
>
> Yet he was unwilling to make his wife Augusta or his son Caesar, though we granted him permission. In fact, he emphatically rejected both proposals, either because he had not yet firmly rooted his own power or because he did not choose either to let his unchaste consort sully the name of Augusta or to permit his son, who was still a boy, to be spoiled by the glamour and the prospects involved in the title of Caesar before he had received his education.

> Hdn. 2.4.9 οὕτω γὰρ μέτριος καὶ ἰσότιμος ἦν ὡς καὶ τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἤδη μειράκιον ὄντα μηδὲ6 ἐς τὴν βασίλειον αὐλὴν ἀναγαγεῖν, ἀλλ' ἔν τε τῇ πατρῴᾳ μένειν οἰκίᾳ, καὶ ἐς τὰ συνήθη προϊόντα διδασκαλεῖα καὶ γυμνάσια ἰδιωτεύοντα ὁμοίως τοῖς λοιποῖς παιδεύεσθαί τε καὶ πάντα πράττειν, οὐδαμοῦ τῦφον ἢ πομπὴν παρεχόμενον βασιλικήν.
>
> So unpretentious and modest was Pertinax, that he didn't bring his son into the imperial palace, even though he at this time was a young man. He stayed in the family's house where he continued in his regular school and gymnasium. In his studies as well as in all other activities he remained a private citizen like everybody else and displayed none of the imperial pomp and arrogance.

We should note that Herodian's version is fully focused on the ideal of a *civilis princeps*. Firstly, Pertinax was too modest to let his son get admission to the palace; secondly, the son remained a regular, Roman citizen. Dio, on the other hand, interprets these seemingly modest actions from a philosophical standpoint. It is here we see Dio's Stoicism: It was not simply about being a *civilis princeps*. Rather, the actions of Pertinax demonstrate that he did not want the imperial life in luxury to ruin his son's mind before he had received his

education (an education which, in line with Stoic thinking, was supposed to make the mind resistant to temptations later on). Dio analyses the motivations of Pertinax as based upon a fundamentally Stoic logic: it is necessary to discipline the mind before entering into a luxurious life, in order to understand that which must be avoided. Dio thus imagines a man who fully lives up to the ideals of the *civilis princeps* while also seeking ways to strengthen the mind, and so achieve an ideal that is also Stoic.

Dio's admiration for Pertinax is also found in his description of his death. This passage therefore needs to be analysed in greater detail. Epictetus gives one example of the way in which a Stoic ought to meet his end:

> Epict. *diss*. 2.1.17-18 θάνατος τί ἐστιν; μορμολύκειον. στρέψας αὐτὸ κατάμαθε· ἰδοῦ, πῶς οὐ δάκνει. τὸ σωμάτιον δεῖ χωρισθῆναι τοῦ πνευματίου, ὡς πρότερον ἐκεχώριστο, ἢ νῦν ἢ ὕστερον. τί οὖν ἀγανακτεῖς, εἰ νῦν; εἰ γὰρ μὴ νῦν, ὕστερον. διὰ τί; ἵνα ἡ περίοδος ἀνύηται τοῦ κόσμου.
>
> What is death? A bugbear. Turn it about and learn what it is; see, it does not bite. The paltry body must be separated from the bit of spirit, either now or later, just as it existed apart from it before. Why are you grieved, then, if it be separated now? For if it be not separated now, it will be later. Why? So that the revolution of the universe may be accomplished.[48]

How does this compare to Pertinax? If Dio wanted to characterise Pertinax through Stoic virtues, his way of coming to terms with his imminent death would be described in accordance to Stoic ideals. This is indeed what Dio tells us:

> Cass. Dio 74.9 δυνηθεὶς γὰρ ἂν μάλιστα μὲν ἀποκτεῖναι τοὺς ἐπελθόντας ᾗ τε γὰρ νυκτερινῇ φυλακῇ καὶ τοῖς ἱππεῦσιν ὥπλιστο, καὶ ἦσαν καὶ ἄλλοι ἐν τῷ παλατίῳ τότε ἄνθρωποι πολλοί, εἰ δὲ μή, κατακρυφθῆναί γε καὶ διαφυγεῖν ποι τάς τε πύλας τοῦ παλατίου καὶ τὰς ἄλλας τὰς διὰ μέσου θύρας κλείσας, τούτων μὲν οὐδέτερον ἐποίησεν, ἐλπίσας δὲ καταπλήξειν αὐτοὺς ὀφθεὶς καὶ πείσειν ἀκουσθεὶς ἀπήντησε τοῖς προσιοῦσιν ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ ἤδη οὖσιν.
>
> For, even though he could in all probability have killed his assailants, – as he had in the night-guard and the cavalry at hand to protect him, and as there were also many people in the palace at the time, – or might at least have concealed himself and made his

48 Translation: Oldfather 1925.

> escape to some place or other, by closing the gates of the palace and the other intervening doors, he nevertheless adopted neither of these courses. Instead, hoping to overawe them by his appearance and to win them over by his words, he went to meet the approaching band, which was already inside the palace.

Dio approved of Pertinax as emperor, and he would probably have preferred him to have ruled longer. But here, Dio is ultimately evaluating the actions of Pertinax as being in line with Stoic ideals: a man who lived according to Stoic principles accepts his death as ever-imminent and welcomes it when it finds him. Being afraid of death is the symptom of a weak soul inhabiting a man who clings to the earthly life. It would have been fundamentally un-stoic if Pertinax had lamented his death and ran for his life. Dio admires the way in which Pertinax showed his strength of mind by acting with courage and trying to talk sense into his eventual murderers.

We end this discussion of psychagogical training with Dio's evaluation of Plautianus, the praetorian prefect of Severus. In line with Stoic thinking, Dio has Severus lament the death of Plautianus with the message that human nature is too weak to handle the amount of honour he received.[49] Thereby, he actually lets Severus show some sort of Stoic insight, although it is only in a rear-view mirror. According to Dio, the senators were accomplices because they poured such adulation over Plautianus. This is basically the story of Sejanus (Tiberius' praetorian prefect) over again. During the reign of Tiberius, the senators realized that the emperor was the only one to whom they could give such excessive honours. Sejanus went mad and effectively destroyed the political culture.[50]

Now, this is not to be misunderstood. Dio is not talking about excessive praise of the emperor. Rather, the point is that the emperor should be expected to be able to cope with the adulation which *he* will inevitably receive from the senators. The emperor is indeed supposed to be something else, something more, than the rest of the elite – also on a psychological level (i.e. the ideals of the wise man). The other Stoic point in all this is that it is the emperor who must control the senators so that they don't end up ruining the political culture. Here, the elite is once again presented as a potentially corrupting force, just as was explained in Book 52: the emperor, Maecenas advises, must make all the appointments and control other members of the elite who would otherwise corrupt the state with their individ-

49 Cass. Dio 77[76].5.1.

50 On the Senate's responsibility for the corruption of Sejanus, see Cass. Dio 58.12.6. For the Senators' adulation of Plautianus, see Cass. Dio 76[75].14.6-7. On the critique of the power given to Plautianus by Severus, see Cass. Dio 76[75].15.1-6.

ualistic aims.[51] According to the Stoics, surrendering to licentiousness, greed, and earthly pleasures are closely connected to having a weak or troubled mind.[52] In this way, Plautianus becomes the most un-stoic man of the Severan regime. He never turned quite as brutal as Sejanus, but he was equally greedy and a slave to indulgence.[53]

5.2 An Iron Age handling of a usurper

Dio's overall evaluation of Severus is not a subject for the present paper. Severus was criticised for several reasons, but one particular episode was especially controversial to Dio. This occurred in the Severan civil war after the death of Pertinax. When he had finally triumphed over Albinus, the last of his political opponents, Dio tells us the following:

> Cass. Dio 76[75].7.3-4 ἰδὼν δ' οὖν τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ, καὶ πολλὰ μὲν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς πολλὰ δὲ τῇ γλώττῃ χαρισάμενος, τὸ μὲν ἄλλο ῥιφῆναι ἐκέλευσε, τὴν δὲ κεφαλὴν ἐς τὴν Ῥώμην πέμψας ἀνεσταύρωσεν. ἐφ' οἷς δῆλος γενόμενος ὡς οὐδὲν εἴη οἱ αὐτοκράτορος ἀγαθοῦ, ἔτι μᾶλλον ἡμᾶς τε καὶ τὸν δῆμον, οἷς ἐπέστειλεν, ἐξεφόβησεν: ἅτε γὰρ παντὸς ἤδη τοῦ ὡπλισμένου κεκρατηκὼς ἐξέχεεν ἐς τοὺς ἀνόπλους πᾶν ὅσον ὀργῆς ἐς αὐτοὺς ἐκ τοῦ πρὶν χρόνου ἠθροίκει.
>
> The emperor, after viewing the body of Albinus and feasting his eyes upon it to the full, while giving free rein to his tongue as well, ordered all but the head to be cast away, but sent the head to Rome to be exposed on a pole. As this action showed clearly that he possessed none of the qualities of a good ruler, he alarmed both us and the populace more than ever by the commands that he sent; for now that he had overcome all armed opposition, he was venting upon the unarmed all the wrath that he had stored up against them in the past.

It is interesting that this single episode has so marked a bearing on Dio's overall evaluation of Severus as an emperor. At first glance, how one treats one's dead enemies seems to have little to do with statesmanship. Or has it? In Stoic philosophy *ira* (anger) and *crudelitas* (brutality) constitute a direct antithesis to *clementia*. Following Seneca,

51 On the choosing of men for official posts, see Cass. Dio 52.14.3. On the controlling of the potentially destructive members of the elite, see Cass. Dio 52.20.1-4.

52 See e.g. Sen., *Ep.* 8; M. Aur. *Med*. 2.10; 2.16.

53 The greediness of Plautianus, see Cass. Dio 76[75].14.2-5. His licentiousness, see Cass. Dio 76[75].15.7.

ira can be said to be the physical manifestation of the desire for revenge or brutality. Thus, *ira* is when the individual actually acts on unhealthy feelings.[54] If *clementia* is forgotten too many times, all humanity will disappear from the soul and only a cruel, evil beast will remain. The result will be *crudelitas* (brutality).[55] Thus, according to the Stoics *ira* is one of the worst feelings of all. To Dio, such brutality from Severus showed his true nature, so to speak – a wise man, a Cato from the *Pharsalia*, could never act in this way. This beast lurked deep within Severus' character, and therefore he was ultimately incapable of being a just, righteous, and good emperor.[56] A wise man will always be capable of suppressing affections, vices, and terrible feelings. These episodes, in which Severus showed himself at his most cruel, revealed to Dio that his soul lacked the moral value and mental strength necessary to be a good emperor.[57]

6 Final Remarks

Existing scholarship on Dio has traditionally focused on the senatorial class and therefore ultimately on the relationship between the emperor and the elite. However, this focus has to some degree neglected the fact that Dio is in fact not too optimistic about the elite's qualities as a leading organ. Throughout his books on the Principate, the elite is closer to an irrational group that corrupts the system than it is to a competent arm of government. Dio's link between the emperor and society as a whole is at least as strong as his link between the emperor and the elite. This has largely gone unnoticed in earlier scholarship.

In his contemporary narrative, Dio does not devote much space to the institutional workings of the political system. Rather, his interest lies in explaining the different roles played by various individuals and groups, ultimately evaluated on the basis of traditional Stoic values. In line with Stoic doctrine, Dio's overarching interest concerning his contemporary narrative is to explain how this period lacked a rational governing force. There was one, and that was Pertinax, but he ruled too briefly to right the wrongs of Commodus. Thereby the whole system became corrupted. Dio shows us the way in which bad (that is, unwise) decisions consistently contributed not only to a

54 Sen. *Ira* 2.1-4.

55 Sen. *Ira* 2.5; 2.12-13.

56 For the Stoics, *crudelitas* was a sign of a corrupted mind. We see this statement in Sen. *Ira* 2.5; 2.12-13.

57 Sen. *Ira* 2.1; M. Aur. *Med*. 2.10. Executions and bloodlust are clear signs of an emperor lacking *clementia*, as shown by Kragelund 2016, 213-36.

dysfunctional political system, but also to a fundamentally immoral world where the wrong groups held too much power. We have observed that Dio sees the political elite as a potentially destructive organ; the army is another. It becomes un-stoic in the sense that the emperors never fulfilled their task of acting as the personified reason of the state so as to control its irrational elements.

Bibliography

Adler, E. (2012). "Cassius Dio's Agrippa-Maecenas Debate: An Operational Code Analysis". *The American Journal of Philology*, 133(3), 477-520.
Andersen, H.A. (1938). *Cassius Dio und die Begründung des Principates*. Berlin: Junker und Dünnhaupt.
Barmann, B.C. (1971). "The Mount Athos Epitome of Cassius Dio's Roman History". *Phoenix*, 25(1), 58-67.
Barnes, T.D. (1984). "The Composition of Cassius Dio's 'Roman History'". *Phoenix*, 38(3), 240-55.
Basore, J.W. (1928). *Seneca: Moral Letters*, vol. 1. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press.
Bertrand, E. (2015). "Cassius Dion et les cycles de l'histoire: du *topos* littéraire à la réflexion historique". Bertrand, E.; Compatangelo-Soussignan, R. (éds), *Cycles de la Nature, Cycles de l'Histoire. De la découverte des météores à la fin de l'âge d'or.* Bordeaux: Ausonius.
Brunt, P.A. (1975). "Stoicism and the Principate". *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 43, 7-35.
Brunt, P.A. (1980). "On Historical Fragments and Epitomes". *The Classical Quarterly*, 30(2), 477-94.
Campbell, R. (2014). *Seneca: Letters from a Stoic*. London: Penguin Books.
Cary, E. (1914-1927). *Cassius Dio: Roman History*. 9 vols. Cambridge (MA); London: Harvard University Press.
Champlin, E. (1998). "Nero Reconsidered". *New England Review*, 19(2), 97-108.
Champlin, E. (2003). "Nero, Apollo, and the Poets". *Phoenix*, 57(3-4), 276-83.
Colish, M.L. (1985). *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*. Leiden: Brill.
De Blois, L. (1994). "Traditional Virtues and New Spiritual Qualities in Third Century Views of Empire, Emperorship and Practical Politics". *Mnemosyne*, Fourth Series, 47(2), 166-76.
Engberg-Pedersen, T. (2017). *Antikkens etiske tradition*. København: Akademisk Forlag.
Fadinger, V. (1969). *Die Begründung des Prinzipats. Quellenkritische Untersuchungen zu Cassius Dio und die Parallelüberlieferung*. Bonn: Rudolf Habelt Verlag.
Fishwick, D. (1990). "Dio and Maecenas: The Emperor and the Ruler Cult". *Phoenix*, 44(3), 267-75.
Gabba, E. (1959). "Storici Greci dell'Impero Romano da Augusto ai Severi". *RSI*, 71, 361-81.
Gangloff, A. (2018). *Pouvoir impérial et vertus philosophiques*. Leiden: Brill.
Gros, E. (1845-1870). *Histoire Romaine de Dion Cassius*. Paris: F. Didot Frères.

Hekster, O. (2002). *Commodus. An Emperor at the Crossroads*. Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben Publisher.
Kemezis, A. (2014). *Greek Narratives of the Roman Empire under the Severans: Cassius Dio, Philostratus and Herodian*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Keyes, C.W. (1928). *Cicero: De Re Publica*. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press.
Kragelund, P. (2016). *Roman Historical Drama – The 'Octavia' in Antiquity and Beyond*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Madsen, J.M. (2016). "Criticising the Benefactors: The Severans and the Return of Dynastic Rule". Lange, C.H.; Madsen, J.M. (eds), *Cassius Dio: Greek Intellectual and Roman Politician*. Leiden: Brill.
Mallan, C. (2013). "The Style, Method, and Programme of Xiphilinus' *Epitome* of Cassius Dio's *Roman History*". *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*, 53, 610-44.
Manuwald, B. (1979). *Cassius Dio und Augustus: philologische Untersuchungen zu den Büchern 45-56 des dionischen Geschichtswerkes*. Wiesbaden: Steiner.
Millar, F. (1964). *A Study of Cassius Dio*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Noe, C. (2019). "Med Commodus som forbillede – en kamp om Principatets ideologiske fundament". *AIGIS*, 19(1), 1-33.
Oldfather, W.A. (1925). *Epictetus: Discourses*. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press.
Rantala, J. (2016). "Dio the Dissident: The Portrait of Severus in the Roman History". Lange, C.H.; Madsen, J.M. (eds), *Cassius Dio: Greek Intellectual and Roman Politician*. Leiden: Brill.
Shaw, B.D. (1985). "The Divine Economy: Stoicism as Ideology". *Latomus*, 44(1), 16-54.
Syme, R. (1939). *The Roman Revolution*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Wallace-Hadrill, A. (1982). "Civilis Princeps: Between Citizen and King". *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 72, 32-48.
Walters, B. (2015). *Lucan: Civil War*. Indianapolis: Hacket Publishing Company.