

The proposed paper will re-examine the Stoic concept of ‘pre-passions’ (προπάθειαι) - preliminary, involuntary affective events which are distinct from actual affections of the soul (πάθη), by drawing on Origen’s (c.185-c.254) use of the concept for Biblical exegesis.

Modern scholarship, for the most part, has been hesitant to attribute the concept of pre-passions to the Old Stoa, treating it instead as an innovation introduced by later Stoics, perhaps as late as Seneca. The situation has not changed much despite the favorable reception of K. Abel’s discussion of early Stoic texts (‘Das Propatheia-theorem: ein Beitrag zur stoischen Affektenlehre’, *Hermes* 111 (1983) 136-49), which constitutes a well-argued case for the claim that the concept is, at least, acknowledged by the Old Stoa; or, indeed, the fact that it has been shown that pre-passions, apart from Stoic sources, feature prominently in the works of Philo of Alexandria and Origen, both of whom certainly draw from sources that predate Seneca. Origen’s discussions of the concept in particular have attracted the attention of both philosophers as well as theologians, who, however, found it difficult to explain how Origen’s information can fit with what is known of the concept from the Stoic sources.

In my presentation, I propose to re-examine Origen’s crucial text (*De principiis* III.2.4) in conjunction with some other less well-known passages and compare the evidence with the extant Stoic sources as well as Philo’s relevant accounts. In this way, I intend to show not merely that the apparent discrepancies between Origen’s use of the concept and the authentic Stoic doctrine can be accommodated, but also that Origen actually preserves invaluable and otherwise unattested information concerning the nature and role of pre-passions.

In this view, pre-passions emerge as constituting an integral component of impressions, thus performing an indispensable function within the whole complex of impressions, assents and impulses. The establishment of pre-passions as an organic part of the Stoic psychology in turn reinforces the claim for their ‘orthodoxy’, which has been doubted for too long.

Finally, my presentation will show how the appropriation of a philosophical concept served to address problems posed by Scriptural passages (particularly those that present Jesus as susceptible to affections) and how, in turn, this concept, precisely by being incorporated into Christian exegesis, endured long after the psychological theory of which it formed a part had been abandoned.