

The Construction of Zeno's "Ideal Community"

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Abstract: Within the annals of Western political thought, the essence and centrality of the Stoic School have played a vital role in the development of Hellenism and subsequent philosophical ideologies. Zeno of Kition, one of the founding figures of Stoicism, made substantial contributions to the formulation of early Stoic principles. Alongside his notable advancements in fields such as ethics, physics, and logic, Zeno's concepts of "the whole world" and "the citizen of the world" represented a pioneering breakthrough within the societal context of that era. These concepts transcended the prevailing class system and held epoch-making significance.

1. Preface

In 333 BC, Zeno was born into a merchant family in Kition, Cyprus. Despite being a Phoenician, he was exposed to Greek philosophy from an early age. His father would often bring back books from his business trips to Greece, which not only developed Zeno's reading and thinking habits, but also introduced him to the works of Socrates, which were renowned in their neighborhood for their wisdom.^[1] As he grew older, Zeno started accompanying his father on trips to transport dyes from Phoenicia to Athens. However, a tragic incident occurred when their merchant ship sank, drastically altering Zeno's life trajectory.

In 312 BC, Zeno's ship embarked from Phoenicia with the purpose of conducting business with Bayrius. However, it tragically met its demise in the waters near Athens. Once he was rescued and reached land, Zeno found himself aimlessly wandering the streets of Athens, soaked from head to toe. In his hands, he held cherished Greek philosophical texts that he had cherished since his teenage years. Zeno's addiction to books was so profound that he tirelessly inquired about locations where he could engage with thinkers akin to Socrates. It was during this period that fate intervened, as the owner of a local bookstore noticed Clates. Coincidentally passing by, the owner motioned towards Clates and directed Zeno to "Follow him." From that moment forward, Zeno chose Clates as his mentor and delved deeper into the realm of Greek philosophy under his guidance.

He studied in Athens for twenty years, during which time Zeno not only absorbed the thoughts of cynicism but also actively engaged with other schools. Through these interactions, his ideological system matured gradually. After leaving Clates and other teachers, Zeno

frequently engaged in philosophical discussions with like-minded individuals such as Ariston, beneath the colonnade of the palace located in downtown Athens. It was during this period that the Stoics emerged onto the stage of Western philosophy.

The Athenians held Zeno in great reverence, entrusting him with the key to their city wall for safekeeping. Furthermore, they bestowed upon him a golden crown and a bronze statue as tokens of their admiration. Throughout his lifetime, Zeno dedicated himself to exploration and approached academic pursuits and reasoning with utmost seriousness. His intellectual endeavors resulted in the authoring of 20 significant works, including "On Life Following Nature," "On Responsibility," "On Law," and "Ethics." Regrettably, the core essence of these profound insights has not withstood the test of time, as they remain lost to contemporary understanding.

Zeno possesses the commendable qualities of thriftiness and resilience. According to reports, he consumes food that does not require the use of fire for preparation and wears a remarkably thin cloak. Additionally, Zeno exhibits remarkable adaptability, and is not particularly fond of engaging in exhilarating activities. He holds the conviction that young individuals should embrace humility and strive to avoid arrogance. Moreover, he highlights the significance of focusing more on the advantages inherent within language rather than mere expression and vocabulary, with the aim of becoming more intellectually astute. Zeno emphasizes the importance of maintaining a dignified and proper demeanor at all times.

Virtue and dignity hold immense value for Zeno, as they are not only seen by him as the means to achieving happiness but also as happiness itself. This notion also remains consistent with Zeno's life, as he lived to the remarkable age of 89 without ever succumbing to illness. Zeno is credited with being the pioneer to introduce the

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concept of "duty" into discourse.

2.The connotation of Zeno's "national thought"

Before discussing Zeno's concept of the state, it is essential to understand the teachings of Heraclitus, an ancient Greek philosopher. Heraclitus, who existed in the 5th century BC, proposed the theory of the origin of fire. According to him, the world consists of active matter and passive matter, with fire representing the active matter and an unspecified material representing the passive matter. Every element in the world is a combination of these two fundamental constituents. In Heraclitus' philosophy, fire itself embodies the concept of "logos" (which can be equated to "idea" and "God" in idealism). Therefore, the notion of "logos" is inherent in everything that exists. This "logos" is what gives every entity in the world its ability to function. By expanding our perspective, we can grasp that the entire universe is also governed by this "logos," meaning that the entire universe operates in accordance with an overarching "idea."^[2]

The Stoics were heavily influenced by the ideas of Heraclitus as well. They believed that "logos" encompassed everything in the world and governed the entire universe. All things operated in accordance with "logos", and all individuals adhered to its laws. Building upon this foundation, Zeno presented the concepts of "the law of nature" and "the whole world" in his book "Ideal World" (originally known as "Politeia", to distinguish it from the works of Plato and Aristotle while incorporating the essence of Zeno's thoughts).

Let us begin by discussing the concept of "the whole world". The interpretation of the term "whole world" in this context differs from the cosmopolitanism currently being studied. However, I am confident that the former significantly impacts the latter. Furthermore, Zeno's philosophy has been translated by some as "world country" or "world city-state", but I contend that neither term adequately captures the essence of Zeno's concept. This is due to the fact that both country and city-state are politically biased, whereas Zeno's notion of "world whole" resembles more of a spiritual community.

As previously stated, all individuals are governed by the principle of "logos," thus belonging to a collective known as "the whole world." Within this global community, every person is deemed equal and referred to as a "citizen of the world."^[3]

Simply stated, virtue is the sole good and its opposite is evil. Happiness, which fosters the flourishing of individuals, represents the ultimate objective, and it can be attained through the pursuit of virtue.^[4]Zeno's notion of "the whole world" aims to establish a profound sense of human harmony. To this end, Zeno has established a citizenship criterion within this "whole world," wherein only individuals possessing "good moral character" are eligible to become citizens. Zeno's conceptualization of "The World as a Whole" overlooks distinctions based on race, class, and physiology, instead, employing morality as the sole criterion for differentiation.

It is evident that he embodies not only the notion of being a "citizen of the world," but also encompasses a comprehensive design of the entire world.

Firstly, it is prohibited to construct temples, courtrooms, and sports facilities within this area. Secondly, there is no circulation of currency within this zone. Furthermore, both men and women are expected to wear identical clothing, disregarding physiological distinctions. Nonetheless, Zeno did not elaborate further on the specifics of the lifestyle.^[5]These three points delineate Zeno's departure from the city-state system, his pursuit of harmony, and his rejection of hierarchy. A more detailed explanation of these concepts will be provided subsequently.

The pursuit of a unified world may seem idealistic, but in reality, the systems, laws, and other elements among political entities such as city-states and countries vary greatly. Thus, the question arises: how can we strive for a cohesive global entity? As previously discussed, the world operates based on the law of logos, representing a natural law capable of reconciling divergent realities. According to Zeno, this natural law remains intangible, as citizens unconsciously adhere to and embrace it. It serves as the foundation for all concrete laws, existing within various ideological systems.^[6] The essential requirements of natural law for citizens can be summarized as "responsibility" and "virtue." "Responsibility" entails aligning one's actions and words with the natural laws, while "virtue" represents the aim of observing these laws and fostering the harmonious development of the global community.

From Zeno's exposition on "the whole world" and "the citizens of the world," it becomes evident that this entity is fundamentally distinct from the city-states of that time. The public spaces abolished by Zeno were core elements of the city-states during that era. Additionally, the size of the world as a whole is not constrained but rather contingent upon the number of virtuous citizens within it. Virtue is the sole criterion for citizenship, thereby abolishing past divisions between Greeks and Manichaeans, as well as between free individuals and slaves in actual city-states. Zeno also places great faith in enlightenment, asserting that even the wicked can transform into virtuous individuals and attain the status of world citizens.^[7]Moreover, the absence of currency circulation in Zeno's constructed world can be best understood as an indication of the state of self-sufficiency and harmony that has been achieved.

3.The origin of Zeno's "national thought"

3.1Alexander's Expansion

To fully grasp the essence of Zeno's ideas, it is crucial to delve into the historical backdrop of his time. As previously stated, Zeno was born in Phoenicia, Cyprus, but due to his father's professional engagements, he immersed himself in Greek philosophy, particularly the works of Socrates. Eventually, he journeyed to Athens, where he became a devoted student of the cynic Clates. Consequently, Zeno's thoughts bear a significant imprint

of Greek philosophy, exemplified by the "cosmopolitanism" inherent in cynicism. Nevertheless, Zeno's thinking also exhibits a notable departure from the conventional city-state-oriented mindset depicted in Plato's Republic.

In addition to the influence of Greek philosophy, the political circumstances of Zeno's era greatly impacted his conception of the entire world. Following a decade of intense warfare, Alexander consistently emerged victorious, conquering and expanding into other regions. The Middle East, and even India, became marked by the presence of Greek city-states. Realizing that sheer force was insufficient to ensure stability within this vast empire, Alexander implemented numerous policies aimed at fostering ethnic integration and establishing positive relationships between Greeks and non-Greeks. In an effort to dismantle Greece's inherent sense of superiority, Alexander also embraced the inclusion of two foreign princesses, setting a precedent for imitation. [8] Despite Alexander's extensive endeavors, he was unable to quell the chaos brought on by expansion. The resulting disorder had a profound impact on the social fabric, leading to moral decay and a deterioration of the world at large.

Under the circumstances of expansion and integration, a relevant concept emerged that greatly influenced traditional Greek philosophy and compelled the ancient Greeks to reconsider the potential for global unification.

3.2 Construction and Development of Zeno's Ethical Theory

According to the Stoics, philosophy can be categorized into logic, physics, and ethics. They liken logic to a trunk, ethics to flesh and blood, physics to the soul, and philosophy as a whole to an "animal" that integrates the first three.

Some people classify the logical part of this categorization as rhetoric and dialectics. The soul is initially devoid of knowledge and experiences, but perception, akin to a seal imprinted on wax, generates an impression which then solidifies into a memory, ultimately combining to form an experiential framework. Through the synthesis of sensation and imagery, ideas are formed, and if these ideas are rooted in experiences, they will yield common understandings. Scientific concepts emerge consciously and systematically, representing the "culmination of meticulous contemplation." Moreover, they argue that the yardstick for knowledge is the "self-evident presence of impression and concept." In essence, if an individual perceives the existence of a tangible object corresponding to a concept upon reading about it, that concept is considered scientifically valid and accurate. The Stoics give significant importance to formal logic, particularly syllogism. [9]

Ethics, often associated with logic, holds significant importance for the Stoics, akin to the significance of flesh and blood. The founder of Stoicism, Zeno, expounded extensively on ethical research, even during his time as a teacher in Clades, where he was exposed to

the radical ethical ideals of cynicism. This exposure greatly influenced Stoicism, leading to the incorporation of ethical doctrines right from its inception. Stoicism holds human society in high regard while disregarding natural philosophy. Furthermore, according to Stoics, the relationship between man and the universe can be likened to that of a small spark and a raging fire, with the former being an integral part of the latter, exhibiting synchronization and coordination. Additionally, Zeno emphasized the eventual burning up and return to the original state of fire for all things, followed by a fresh start. According to Stoicism, the world unfolds according to this supreme law, with everything occurring in a predetermined manner for a specific purpose. This belief can thus be characterized as Stoic fatalism.

Therefore, it is essential for individuals to gauge their personal objectives based on the realization of the universe's purpose. [10] This necessitates adhering to God's will, abiding by societal norms, and fulfilling one's responsibilities. Such a moral existence, in their belief, leads to the pursuit of happiness. The early Stoic school of thought maintained that genuine joy and fulfillment in life could only be achieved through leading a virtuous and rational existence. Consequently, they advocated for the restraint of desires and the abandonment of irrationality. Whether one is wealthy or destitute, honored or disgraced, high-born or low-born, healthy or plagued by illness, the Stoics advocated for adopting an indifferent stance, aiming to achieve tranquility and free themselves from cravings. This early Stoic philosophy, which aligns with the natural course of destiny and demonstrates apathy, combines elements of both fatalism and asceticism. However, in contrast to the Epicureans, the Stoics place excessive emphasis on leading a simpler life and exhibiting indifference, ultimately succumbing entirely to idealistic fatalistic beliefs.

The Stoic concept of "cosmic tranquility" or "freedom from passion or indifference" is fundamentally guided by the principle of reason, known as the cosmic logos (which will be elaborated later). In the context of human society, the implementation of this principle manifests as "virtue is the only good." This idea emphasizes that such "good" can be attained through practice and education. Socrates viewed error as merely a specific instance of reason, whereas Stoics, who regard themselves as upholding the Orthodox Stoic tradition, expand on it to include various passions such as joy, fear, desire, and sadness.

Misinterpreting current kindness brings happiness, while misinterpreting future goodness incites desire. Misinterpreting current malevolence leads to pain, and misjudging future evils evokes fear. All forms of emotions are abnormal states of the soul, which ought to be not only controlled, but also eliminated. [11]

4. Breakthrough and enlightenment of Zeno's "national thought"

4.1 Breakthroughs and Limitations of "The World as a Whole"

As previously mentioned, Plato's Republic and Cynics' Cosmopolitanism had a significant impact on Zeno's ideology.^[12] Both Plato and Zeno extensively discussed the concept of the "state", yet they presented two distinct worlds. Plato's envisioning of the "state" remained confined within the framework of a city-state, lacking any transcendence of the existing Greek city-state system. His Republic was comprised of three classes: rulers, defenders, and laborers, each fulfilling their respective responsibilities. In contrast, Zeno's "world as a whole" represented a departure from the limitations of the city-state system, embodying the essence of a global community. This whole had no predefined boundaries, and all citizens were considered equal. Influenced by his mentor Clates, Zeno's ideas were further shaped by the principles of cynicism. One hallmark of cynicism is the proposition that the city-state deviates from its inherent nature, a notion also reflected in Zeno's conception of the World as a Whole.

However, it is worth noting that cynicism only pays attention to personal happiness, while Zeno's "The World as a Whole" pays attention to the community under "logos", and this community is a spiritual community, not a political unity, with morality and ethics as the link.

From the above discussion on Zeno's thought, it is evident that his concept of the "world as a whole" defies the prevailing principle and hierarchy of the Greek traditional thought, thus showcasing the value of Zeno's ideas. While the city-state system was dominant during that era, it also fostered division and isolation. Each city-state, as an independent political entity, established its own self-contained system encompassing citizens, institutions, and laws, consequently leading to the fragmentation and separation among city-states. The Peloponnesian War serves as a vivid example of the hostility and conflicts that occurred between these city-states. Within a multitude of city-states, the inhabitants boasted a sense of superiority over foreigners, thus restricting the boundaries of ancient Greek thought within the confines of the city-state system. However, with Alexander's extensive conquests, people began to realize the need for a new perspective, and it was Zeno who first proposed the idea of viewing the world as a whole. Additionally, Zeno believed that virtue was the sole criterion for distinguishing individuals, thus rejecting prevailing ancient Greek ideas such as slavery and the division of society into barbarians and non-barbarians. This revolutionary stance transcended the established class system of that time and held immense significance for its era.

However, it must be acknowledged that Zeno's World as a Whole is characterized by rationalism. Firstly, within this world, virtue has replaced race, nationality, rank, and physiology as the sole criterion for distinguishing individuals. However, this concept is disconnected from

reality, and this moral community only exists in the realm of imagination. Secondly, it is unrealistic to attribute dominance to the natural law determined by "logos", as it fails to fulfill the role of a genuine law in maintaining social operations. Additionally, there are numerous contradictions in Zeno's ideology. For instance, while assuming that the world is governed by natural laws, the purpose of blindly striving for ultimate goodness and virtue becomes questionable. Similarly, Zeno's view on destiny suggests that people's fate is predetermined by "logos", yet he also acknowledges the significance of individuals' efforts in shaping their own destiny. When this perspective on destiny is applied to society, citizens find themselves trapped in a dilemma of either adapting to their fate or attempting to change it.

4.2 "The World as a Whole" and "a community with a shared future of mankind"

Throughout the course of human development, we can see that the concept of "the whole world" is constantly enriched and improved in the social evolution. Both the attempt of supranational organization and the assumption of world government fully demonstrate the yearning for peace of mankind. However, the differences in ideology, nationality and geography still limit human exploration. We can't ignore these objective facts, but this does not mean a total negation of the idea of "the whole world".

Zeno's "world whole" is different from the present "world country". The core of the former is actually a moral community, which is not subordinate to modern political or economic fields. In order to achieve the harmony of the world and even the universe, human beings should respect each other, conform to nature and abide by morality, and take this as the way to get happiness. Up to now, the reasonable part of the core of the thought of "the whole world" is still applicable: global problems such as climate deterioration, epidemic situation and rising terrorism stand in front of all mankind, which cannot be dealt with by the meager strength of one country and one region. Only by letting go of prejudice and diluting differences can we join hands to better promote the development of human society. This is the significance of "a community with a shared future of mankind".

"The World as a Whole" holds that the link connecting the people of the world is "logos"; For the "a community with a shared future of mankind", this link refers to the fundamental interests of human survival. The background of the former is the expansion of imperial territory and national integration under Alexander's rule, and the resulting social disorder and chaos; The latter was born in the unprecedented changes in the world, and the change of international pattern and order added instability to the international community. The former has idealistic color and puts forward ideas for solving social problems at that time; The latter is a feasible scheme based on reality and contributing to the current human development.

5. Conclusion

From the above discussion, it can be seen that both "the whole world" and "a community with a shared future of mankind" have crossed the existence of objective obstacles, thus achieving a high degree of human harmony. Since ancient times, mankind has never stopped exploring world peace and stability, but how to face the current global challenges, I think we can get the answer from Zhi Nuo's "world as a whole" and "a community with a shared future of mankind".

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