

NATURE AND REASON IN STOIC ETHICS

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This dissertation develops an interpretation of the foundational commitments of Stoic ethics. I argue, first, that the Stoics are committed to rational eudaimonism, understood as the claim that all reasons for action are relative to and explained by an agent's own happiness. I argue, second, that this commitment clarifies the role of cosmic nature in Stoic theory and structures two fundamental Stoic doctrines, the doctrine of *oikeiôsis* and the doctrine of preferred indifferents. According to the doctrine of *oikeiôsis*, an organism's *telos* is realized through the perfection of its controlling faculty or *hêgemonikon*. I argue that the Stoic account of self-perception is the most important element of this doctrine and helps to explain its role in Stoic ethical argument. According to the doctrine of preferred indifferents, although external circumstances make no difference to an agent's happiness, the rational Stoic agent will prefer some indifferent outcomes to others. I argue that, as a consequence of Stoic eudaimonism, the value of preferred and dispreferred indifferents should be understood as epistemic rather than intrinsic. I conclude by distinguishing the Stoic conception of practical reason from Humean and Kantian conceptions.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jacob Klein was born in Kealahou, Hawaii. He received a B.A. in English, classics and philosophy from Hillsdale College in 2000. He received an M.A. in philosophy from Virginia Tech University in 2002 and an M.A. in philosophy from Cornell University in 2006. In 2006-07 he studied classics at King's College London.

*Erat enim ratio, profecta a rerum natura, et ad recte faciendum impellens et a delicto
avocans, quae non tum denique incipit lex esse quom scripta est, sed tum quom orta est.*

-- Cicero

Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.

-- T.S. Eliot

for Katherine

μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ

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PREFACE

Judged by almost any standard, the doctrines of the Greek Stoics have exercised a profound influence on Western philosophy. For nearly five hundred years Stoicism remained one of the dominant philosophical schools of antiquity, and its eventual fusion with Rome's political and literary culture ensured the permanence of its influence.¹ Studied and admired by the likes of Scipio Aemilianus and Cato the Younger, the tenets of Stoicism were widely diffused in the political and literary culture of the late Roman Republic and early Empire. When the texts of the Greek thinkers themselves were finally lost to history, something of their spirit remained in the ethos of Rome itself and in the imprint Rome left, in turn, on the Western world.²

Thanks largely to the industry and prestige of Cicero, a core of Stoic ethical doctrine survived throughout the Middle Ages and passed finally into the Renaissance and modern eras where, together with other fragments of antiquity, it found renewed expression. Examples abound. Stoic ethical doctrines figure explicitly in the thought of Justus Lipsius and Hugo Grotius and to a lesser degree in that of humanists like Montaigne, whose essays regularly advert to the claims of Stoic ethics.³ Descartes's

¹ For a comprehensive study of Stoicism's literary and cultural legacy, see M. Colish, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages* (Leiden, 1985). On Stoicism's influence on Roman political thought, see M. Schofield, 'Epicurean and Stoic Political Thought', in C. Rowe and M. Schofield (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought* (Cambridge, 2000), 435-56. For Stoicism's philosophical influence, see K. Ierodiakonou, 'The Study of Stoicism: Its Decline and Revival', in K. Ierodiakonou (ed.), *Topics in Stoic Philosophy* (Oxford, 1999), 1-22; T.H. Irwin, 'Stoic Naturalism and its Critics', in B. Inwood (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics* (Cambridge, 2003), 345-364; A. Long, 'Stoicism in the Philosophical Tradition: Spinoza, Lipsius, Butler', *ibid.*, 365-92.

² For the influence of Stoicism in the New Testament, see J. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (London, 1896), 270-333. Cf. also T. Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Louisville, 2000) and T. Engberg-Pedersen, 'Stoicism in the Apostle Paul: A Philosophical Reading', in S. Strange (ed.), *Stoicism* (Cambridge, 2004), 52-75.

³ Many of Montaigne's essays might be cited in this connection. See *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans. D. Frame (Stanford, 1965). For Stoicism in Lipsius and Butler, see J. Cooper, 'Justus Lipsius and the Revival of Stoicism in Late Sixteenth-Century Europe', in N. Brender and L. Krassnoff (eds.), *New Essays on the History of Autonomy* (Cambridge, 2004), 7-29; T. Irwin, 'Stoic Naturalism in Butler' ['Butler'], in B. Inwood (ed.), *Hellenistic and Early Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge, 2003), 274-300; For Stoicism in Grotius, see C. Brooke, 'Grotius, Stoicism and *oikeiōsis*', *Grotiana*, 29 (2008), 25-50.

letters to Princess Elizabeth reveal a close familiarity with Stoicism, as does the work of Spinoza and Pascal.⁴ The naturalism of Joseph Butler clearly builds on Stoic views, and Adam Smith's *Theory of Human Sentiments* devotes more space to Stoicism than to any other ancient ethical theory.⁵ It is likely that Stoic ethical doctrines, particularly as expressed in Cicero's *De officiis*, substantially influenced Kant's own ethical system.⁶ Still more recently, Stoic themes appear in the ethics of F.H. Bradley and T.H. Green and recur in the work of Nietzsche.

Impressed, perhaps, by the scope of this influence, commentators have frequently credited the Stoics with fundamental and far-sighted innovations in ethics. To take an eminent example, Henry Sidgwick suggests in his *Outlines of the History of Ethics* that ancient Stoicism marks an important transition from ancient to modern modes of ethical thought.⁷ Many subsequent critics have shared Sidgwick's judgment. According to Max Forschner, "the Stoic school formulated crucial aspects of that which the Kantian tradition calls morality."⁸ According to Julia Annas, the Stoics are the first to hold that "morality requires impartiality to all others from the moral point of view".⁹ In Alan Donagan's view, the Stoics "are to be credited with forming the first reasonably clear conception of morality".¹⁰ Alasdair MacIntyre proposes that the Stoics abandon teleological ethics for a law-based conception, and Mark Murphy finds

⁴ On Stoicism in the correspondence of Descartes and Elizabeth of Bohemia, see M. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton, 1994), 4.

⁵ On Stoicism in Adam Smith, see G. Vivenza, *Adam Smith and the Classics* (Oxford, 2001), Chapter 2 and 'Postscript'.

⁶ For what is perhaps an overstatement of this possible influence, see K. Reich, 'Kant and Greek Ethics', *Mind*, 192 (1939), 446-63. Cf. also G. Desjardins, 'Terms of *De officiis* in Hume and Kant', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 28 (1967), 237-42; M. Nussbaum, 'Kant and Stoic Cosmopolitanism', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 5 (1997), 1-25; A. Dyck, *A Commentary on Cicero's De officiis* (London, 1998), 47-8; M. Kuehn, *Kant, A Biography* (Cambridge, 2001), 278ff.

⁷ H. Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics* (London, 1962), 105.

⁸ "die Stoa entscheidende Gesichtspunkte dessen ausformuliert, was die kantische Tradition Moralität nennt" (my translation). See M. Forschner, 'Zur actualität der Stoischen Ethik', in H. Flashar and O. Gigon (eds.), *Aspects de la philosophie hellénistique, Entretiens sur l'Antiquité classique*, vol. xxxii, 325-59 at 327.

⁹ J. Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* ['Morality'] (Oxford, 1993), 265.

¹⁰ A. Donagan, *The Theory of Morality* (Chicago, 1977), 4.

the Stoics "holding the right to be prior to the good".¹¹ M.M. McCabe brings Stoicism thoroughly up to date, crediting Chrysippus with an appreciation of Nagel's "view from nowhere".¹² Sometimes the comparisons go the other way and are less complimentary. Hastings Rashdall speaks of "the revolting and inhuman Stoicism to which Kant's ideal logically leads".¹³

But despite a widespread conviction that Stoic ethics is presciently modern in some respect or other, there is little scholarly consensus as to its larger shape and structure. There is little agreement, for example, about the way in which specific Stoic doctrines fit within a broader ethical framework or about the grounds on which ethical claims are justified, in the Stoic view. This disagreement is especially apparent in connection with two basic elements of Stoic ethics: the Stoics' identification of *eudaimonia* as the human good, and their thesis that a life led in accordance with nature satisfies an appropriate conception of this good. The relationship between these claims is puzzling. On the one hand, the Stoics appear to accept a form of eudaimonism broadly in the tradition of Plato and Aristotle. On the other, they strongly affirm the intrinsic value of rational agency, and they have appeared to some to embrace a commitment to impartiality that is somehow founded on the distinctive worth of rational agents.

Recent scholarship on Stoicism has had little to say about how or indeed whether these commitments fit together. A number of recent treatments tend to ignore Stoicism's eudaimonist credentials, drawing parallels instead between Stoic ethics and

¹¹ A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame, 1981), 169; M. Murphy, 'The Natural Law Tradition in Ethics', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/natural-law-ethics>.

¹² See M.M. McCabe, 'Extend or Identify: Two Stoic Accounts of Altruism' ['Two Accounts'], in R. Salles (ed.), *Metaphysics, Soul and Ethics in Ancient Thought: Themes from the Work of Richard Sorabji* (Oxford, 2005), 413-44. In fairness to McCabe, Nagel can sound a lot like Chrysippus, as when he stresses the importance of what he calls the "cosmic question", or how "one can bring into one's individual life a recognition of one's relation to the universe as a whole". See T. Nagel, *Secular Philosophy and the Religious Temperament* (Oxford, 2009), 5. Nagel mentioned in conversation that he did not have the Stoics in mind.

¹³ H. Rashdall, *The Theory of Good and Evil* (Oxford, 1907), 120.

agent-neutral or law-based frameworks purportedly characteristic of some modern theories. Yet if we can understand how the eudaimonist foundation of Stoicism, which the sources clearly attest, is supposed to support some of the Stoics' more familiar conclusions in ethics, we may perhaps hope better to understand those conclusions. We may also hope, perhaps, better to understand the way in which the ancients in general conceive the project of ethics and ethical justification, for discussions of Stoicism have been central to a number of recent studies of ancient eudaimonism generally. A sharper understanding of the foundations of Stoic ethics may reasonably hope to shed light on this broader debate.¹⁴

To achieve or at least approach such an understanding is the central aim of this dissertation. In the chapters that follow I develop and defend an account of the foundational commitments of Stoic ethics. Though I am not primarily concerned either with specific requirements of Stoicism or with the form such requirements may take, I try to show that this foundational framework is of relevance for understanding the details of the Stoic theory and that it constrains them at specific points. Indeed it is difficult, as I shall argue, to understand the central doctrines of Stoic ethics without situating them in relation to the Stoic understanding of *eudaimonia* and *phusis*. In working to illuminate these fundamental conceptions, I hope to illustrate the way in which they structure particular Stoic claims.

Some of the questions I raise are closely related to contemporary discussions of rational justification, and I have consciously tried to bring contemporary terms and distinctions to bear on ancient views. Since the application of contemporary distinctions to ancient thought is to a degree unavoidable, the appropriate question is not whether to make use of them but how to do so in a way that clarifies rather than

¹⁴ See, e.g., J. Annas, *Morality*, 131, where Annas proposes as a central goal of her book understanding the Stoic thesis that "virtue is sufficient for happiness".

distorts the ancient record. Questions I consider include, for example, whether motivational states are to be given a basic priority in rational justification, in the Stoic view, what justificatory role is played by a conception of human and cosmic nature, on the Stoic account, and whether Stoic theory is plausibly described as impartial in some sense of the term. I have assumed throughout both that there are ancient terms available in which to raise these questions, and that the questions themselves are not removed from the central concerns of ancient thinkers. Where they are not raised explicitly in ancient texts, they are frequently suggested, and I believe they would have been readily recognizable in antiquity.

Some of the answers the Stoic theory gives to these questions are not the ones that contemporary theorists may find most plausible. Though I have tried to see what can be said for some of the Stoic answers, my main purpose has been to clarify rather than to evaluate the Stoic account. I have not tried to show that Stoic ethics can be fully squared with contemporary views or made to seem wholly plausible by contemporary lights. On the other hand, I am inclined to think that some of the points of deepest difference are also the points at which the study of ancient philosophy may prove most illuminating. Behind some of the conclusions of Stoic theory that contemporary ethicists may incline to reject is a distinctive account of practical reason whose central claims remain defensible and are, indeed, defended in contemporary philosophical debate.

The conception of Stoicism for which I shall argue is that of a naturalist theory according to which the good consists in the perfected exercise of rationality in human agents. The norms by which such rational perfection is measured, however, are both substantive and external to human psychology. They are not, that is to say, norms of formal or internal consistency, and they ought to be distinguished clearly from Kantian and Humean accounts. Stoic ethics, moreover, is not a theory about what is good

simpliciter, but a theory about what is good *for* human beings. Practical reason, as the Stoics conceive it, is *prudential* reason, and this thesis distinguishes Stoicism from various contemporary strains of perfectionism and Kantianism.

What my analysis shows, I think, is that some of the elements of Stoicism commentators have singled out as distinctively modern are not, in fact, the product of a characteristically modern or radically impartial theory, but rather a consequence of the Stoic commitment to a particular form of rational eudaimonism, conjoined to a substantive conception of rationality whose most perfect expression is found in the organization of nature itself. Right action, according to the Stoics, is not prior to a teleological account of well-being. It is rather to be understood through a substantive account of *eudaimonia* as perfected rational agency realized in conformity to the natural order. To act on the reasons that apply to an agent, the Stoics insist, is to act in a way that is good for the agent, *because* so acting is good for the agent. This is an instructive account. Where it is not wholly persuasive, it may still prove cogent and challenging. A secondary aim is to show that this is so.

The plan of my project is as follows. Chapter One argues for an understanding of Stoic eudaimonism according to which all reasons for action are relative to and explained by the agent's own *eudaimonia*. This interpretation is broadly in keeping with the form of rational eudaimonism Henry Sidgwick and many other commentators have associated with ancient ethical theories in general. Yet it differs in important respects from some contemporary characterizations of eudaimonism and from a number of interpretations of Stoic eudaimonism in particular. Specifically, I argue for a claim both about the scope and priority of *eudaimonia*: first, that no consideration counts as a reason for action unless the agent's *eudaimonia* is furthered by acting on it and, second, that appeals to *eudaimonia* constitute the most basic kind of justificatory consideration in the Stoic view. Though the Stoic concept of *eudaimonia* is

extensionally equivalent to those of virtue and conformity to nature, it has justificatory priority over these other concepts. According to the Stoics, one ought to be virtuous, ought to live in conformity with nature, because that is what one's own welfare requires.

Chapter Two seeks to clarify appeals to nature in Stoic theory by distinguishing three ways in which references to nature in Stoic ethics might be understood: as references to facts about (1) cosmic nature, (2) human nature objectively conceived or (3) the content of human psychology. It then considers a recent interpretation of Stoicism defended by Julia Annas, according to which the basic claims of Stoic ethics do not depend on the Stoic understanding of the cosmos as a whole. I argue, first, that this reading assumes without argument a broadly Humean constraint according to which the requirements of an ethical theory, to be plausible, must be able to be endorsed from the perspective of the agent to whom they apply. I further argue that this constraint is incompatible with the interpretation of Stoicism Annas herself favors. Finally, I argue that Stoic theory is itself incompatible with this constraint and, accordingly, that Hume's views should not control an interpretation of Stoic ethics.

Having emphasized the basic incompatibility of Stoic and Humean accounts of rational justification, I turn in Chapter Three to the distinctive account of the human good expressed in the Stoic theory of *oikeiōsis*, which describes the developmental process by which an understanding of the good is acquired. According to one interpretation of this account, all appropriate motivation expresses a dominant impulse to self-preservation that persists throughout this development and constitutes a criterion of rational action in the human case. According to a second interpretation, rational maturity in humans is characterized by the abandonment of this motivation altogether. I argue that both views are mistaken in supposing that the Stoics have a

particular interest in *self-preserving* behavior at all. The import of their *oikeiōsis* theory lies rather in its emphasis on *self-perception*, the motivational mechanism that controls and explains appropriate action in both the animal and human case. The Stoics hold that the human good depends on a form of perception whose perfection is *constitutive* of practical rationality, an analogue of the perceptual awareness observable in animals. The account of self-perception they defend is a fundamental component of their *oikeiōsis* doctrine and provides the basis of their perfectionist ethics.

Chapter Four takes up a second foundational doctrine of Stoic theory, the Stoic account of external resources or *preferred indifferents*. I argue that given the Stoics' identification of *eudaimonia* with virtue alone, facts about preferred indifferents can figure only proximately in the justification of rational action on their account. Specifically, since no particular configuration of indifferents is required for virtue and happiness, preferred indifferents can provide only defeasible, epistemic reasons that support belief and action. Though the sage endeavors to promote the distribution of indifferents that best accords with the order of nature as she understands it, it is this endeavor itself, grounded in the knowledge that constitutes virtue, on which the value of her actions depends. It is therefore misleading to characterize preferred indifferents either as possessing intrinsic value or as objects of rational concern in their own right. According to the Stoics, the extrinsic, epistemic value of indifferents plays a role in determining the content of virtue but not in its final justification. Actions, on the Stoic account, are justified only through their relation to virtue and constitutive contribution to happiness.¹⁵

¹⁵ For the progressor for whom virtue is not yet practically possible, the justification of action cannot depend on a *constitutive* contribution to happiness, but this does not show that the justification of the progressor's rational action cannot be eudaimonist in form. Here the details of the Stoic theory remain obscure, but the rational justification of the progressor's actions could in principle depend on their instantiating an instrumental or counterfactual relation to the *telos* of happiness.

Chapter Five draws from these arguments a number of tentative conclusions about the Stoic conception of reason. I first consider the claim that Stoicism supports an impartial conception of practical reason's requirements. After distinguishing a number of ways in which impartiality has been characterized, I argue that the Stoic theory supports only a weak and rather unglamorous form of impartiality, one that is less controversial than the view with which the Stoics are sometimes credited. I argue further that although the Stoic account of practical rationality is not Kantian in some of the respects commentators have claimed, we may nevertheless identify two fundamental points at which Stoic ethics indeed invites comparison with Kantian ethics. I conclude by suggesting that the central elements of the Stoic account of practical reason remain challenging and defensible today.

Two further methodological points are perhaps in order at the outset. It is misleading to speak, as I have been doing, of the Stoics and of Stoic theory as though Stoic views were a homogeneous whole. Though our evidence for the development of Stoicism throughout its long history is regrettably fragmentary, it is clear that certain doctrines were altered and developed in substantive ways that sometimes differ from their earlier articulations. In a dissertation of this length, whose focus is some of the central philosophical issues at the foundations of Stoic ethical theory, I have been unable to enter into the details of this development with the care they deserve, and which a more satisfactory study certainly requires. To speak of Stoic thought as though it were a unified whole has been all but unavoidable. On the other hand, it is probably fair to say that most of the later developments in Stoicism for which we have evidence do not substantially obscure either the main outlines of orthodox Stoic ethics or the central questions I have raised here.¹⁶

¹⁶ I have, however, taken care not to rely on the doctrines of Panaetius and Posidonius at those points at which they are thought to have departed from the older orthodoxy.

In my use of sources, I have followed a majority of scholars in assuming that studies attempting to capture an old Stoic orthodoxy do well to aim at reconstructing the views of Chrysippus.¹⁷ Here a number of principles might be adopted. One might, for example, include in such a reconstruction only claims for which we have an explicit attribution to Chrysippus himself.¹⁸ Such a method produces a picture that is perhaps more certain but is also more limited. Though I have tried to privilege fragments of earlier Greek sources whenever possible, I have not hesitated to make use of later material, including the work of Epictetus, Seneca and Marcus Aurelius.¹⁹ Though this approach may prove objectionable to some, I have found little reason to question the basic orthodoxy of these sources when it comes to the tenets of Stoicism with which I am concerned. In any case, if we wish to pursue the details of Stoicism at any length, there are few alternatives to such an approach. It is heartening to note that Seneca and Epictetus appear to represent Chrysippus as the touchstone of ancient orthodoxy. On those few occasions when Seneca ventures beyond acknowledged Stoic views, he is usually careful to observe that this is so.²⁰

¹⁷ E.g., this is broadly the approach adopted by Brad Inwood, among others. See esp. *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism* [*Ethics*] (Oxford, 1985), 183.

¹⁸ Josiah Gould rigorously observes this narrower constraint in *The Philosophy of Chrysippus* (Leiden, 1970). See esp. 1-6. Cf. also R. Dufour, *Chrysippe: oeuvre philosophique*, 2 vols. (Paris, 2004).

¹⁹ For the general reliability of Diogenes Laertius as a source for Chrysippus, see B. Inwood, *Ethics*, 188-89; A. Long, 'The Logical Basis of Stoic Ethics' ['Basis'], in *Stoic Studies* (Berkeley, 1996), 134-55 and 'Postscript', *ibid.*, 153-54. On the basic orthodoxy of Hierocles, see B. Inwood, 'Hierocles the Stoic: Theory and Argument in the Second Century A.D.' ['Hierocles'], *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 2 (1984), 152-55; A. Long, 'Hierocles on *oikeiōsis* and Self-perception' ['Self-perception'], in A. Long, *Stoic Studies* (Berkeley, 1996), 250-52; S. Pembroke, '*Oikeiōsis*', in A. Long (ed.), *Problems in Stoicism* (London, 1971), 114-49, esp. 118; Cf. also H. von Arnim, *Hierokles, Ethische Elementarlehre* (Berlin, 1906), 25-36. The relation of Cicero's work to old Stoic views remains controversial. Annas and White are inclined to favor the *De finibus* account as an authentic source for early Stoic theory. Inwood and Long use it with more caution. I see little justification for Annas's general bias against Epictetus and Marcus as sources for Stoic orthodoxy. Both were trained extensively in Stoic philosophy and are likely to have read Chrysippus with care. Neither appears to diverge greatly from what we can know of the earlier Greek Stoics.

²⁰ As at *Ep.* 74.23

CHAPTER 1

FOUNDATIONS

1.1 Introduction

Like most ancient ethical theorists, the Greek Stoics are eudaimonists in some sense of the term.²¹ The summaries of Stoic ethics preserved by Diogenes Laertius and Stobaeus include explicit statements of the Stoics' commitment to eudaimonism, and eudaimonism of some form is the implicitly assumed framework of Cicero's *De finibus*. Though it is not always easy to see what Stoic eudaimonism consists in or what it entails, the details of the Stoic account matter. As I shall argue, the Stoics are committed to a conception of practical reason that is broadly self-regarding but nevertheless objective, grounded in a substantive conception of human nature rather than the content of an agent's beliefs or desires. A careful consideration of this framework helps to show how specific ethical conclusions reached by the Stoics ought to be understood. It also helps us to see why, contrary to some recent interpretations, the foundations of Stoic ethics are neither Humean nor Kantian nor wholly impartial. Though impartial elements are present in Stoic theory, the Stoics nevertheless accept the basic terms of Glaucon's challenge: a rational justification for morality, they suppose, will have to proceed in ultimately agent-centered terms.

Many of the conclusions reached by the Stoic school are best understood when situated within this framework, yet some of the questions that arise for other

²¹ Here and throughout, I sometimes render 'eudaimonia' as 'happiness', mostly to avoid repetition of the Greek term. Nothing in my argument depends on this translation, however. For some considerations in its favor, see R. Kraut, 'Two Conceptions of Happiness', *The Philosophical Review*, 88 (1979), 167-97; G. Vlastos, 'Happiness and Virtue in Socrates' Moral Theory' ['Happiness'], in *Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Ithaca, 1991), 200-235 at 201-03. Cf. also J. Annas, 'Should Virtue Make You Happy?', in L. Jost and R. Shiner (eds.), *Eudaimonia and Well-being: Ancient and Modern Conceptions* (Kelowna, 2003), 1-19; T. Irwin, 'The Structure of Aristotelian Happiness', *Ethics*, 101 (1991), 382-91. For a dissenting view, see L. Sumner, 'Happiness Now and Then', in L. Jost and R. Shiner (eds.), *Eudaimonia and Well-being: Ancient and Modern Conceptions* (Kelowna, 2003), 21-39. Two valuable discussions of Stoic eudaimonism in particular are A. Long, 'Aristotle's Legacy to Stoic Ethics', *Bulletin of the London University Institute of Classical Studies*, 15 (1968), 72-85, and A. Long, 'Stoic Eudaimonism', *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, vol. iv (1989), 77-101.

eudaimonist theories do not arise for the Stoic view. For example, the question whether *eudaimonia* itself should be understood in monistic or pluralistic terms, a focus of much of the literature on Aristotelian eudaimonism, is of little relevance to the Stoic account. The Stoics clearly hold a monistic view according to which *eudaimonia* consists in nothing other than the activities that flow from the virtuous character of the ideally rational agent.²² Yet other fundamental questions do arise in the Stoic case. Apart from a particular account of the content of *eudaimonia* we may ask about the relationship between *eudaimonia* and rational justification as a whole, and here we may distinguish two important questions: (1) Does *eudaimonia* as the Stoics conceive it embrace all of the objects at which an agent may rationally aim? (2) How is the relationship between practical reason and motivation to be understood, according to the Stoics?

These questions are central both to an interpretation of ancient Stoicism and to a broader interpretive debate about the rational foundations of ancient ethics as a whole; for much of this broader debate has been concerned to clarify ancient conceptions of the relationship between self-interest, motivation and rational justification at a more general level. The answers we attribute to the ancient theorists will shape our understanding of their ethical views in basic ways. For instance, someone who believes both that Aristotle identifies *eudaimonia* exclusively with the activity of contemplation and that he regards *eudaimonia* as the only rational aim will attribute to him the conclusion that an agent has reason to act only in ways that further a life of contemplation for herself. But one might avoid this unattractive conclusion by rejecting the latter claim and arguing, instead, that *eudaimonia* is not the only

²² Virtue consists in a settled, cognitive condition in the Stoic view. Happiness, strictly speaking, also requires the *activities* that accompany this condition (Stob. 2.77). Though these may vary in scope, the essential character of virtue is not altered by circumstance, according to the Stoics. In this respect Seneca compares virtue to a circle that varies in size but not essence (*Ep.* 54.27). Cf. Cicero, *Fin.* 3.47-8.

rational end an agent may have, in Aristotle's view. Aristotle's rational agent might be thought to have some reason to pursue *eudaimonia* but also some reason to act on various non-eudaimonist considerations. On such an interpretation, Aristotle's specific account of *eudaimonia* does not structure the whole of his ethical theory, for it does not exhaustively determine the nature of the reasons with which his ethics deals and to which a rational agent will respond. The answers given to these questions in the case of the Stoic theory will similarly guide an interpretation of Stoic ethics.

In the present chapter and the chapter to follow, I try to answer these questions as they apply to Stoicism. By offering an account of the way in which the Stoics conceive the project of rational justification, these chapters provide a basis for the interpretation of more specific Stoic doctrines in later chapters. The present chapter first distinguishing a number of ways in which interpreters have understood (and in some cases ignored) the Stoic commitment to eudaimonism. I then argue for an answer to the first question, concluding that according to the Stoics all rational justification must ultimately refer to an account of an agent's own *eudaimonia*. The chapter to follow takes up the second question. I argue there that the Stoics believe the content of *eudaimonia* to be determined independently of an agent's motivational psychology.

1.2 Ancient eudaimonism and the scope of rational justification

According to one long-standing interpretation of Greek eudaimonism, all rational action aims ultimately at a given conception of *eudaimonia*. Since *eudaimonia* is in turn to be identified with an agent's own welfare or good, this account holds that practical reason is self-regarding in the following broad sense: an agent has ultimate reason to pursue a course of action just in case and insofar as it best

further her interest, however the concrete details of her interest are understood.²³

Sidgwick famously characterizes ancient ethical theories along these lines, arguing that they are both monistic and egoistic. They are monistic, he believes, in that they identify a single, ultimate source for the reasons that justify action.²⁴ They are egoistic in that they identify this source with the promotion of the agent's benefit.²⁵ Sidgwick distinguishes this conception of practical reason from theories that posit a further, non-self-interested end (such as duty) at which practical reason may also aim. If this account of the ancients is correct, then together with the theories of Plato and

²³ This thesis, or some form of it, is often characterized as a commitment to *rational* or *normative* as distinct from *psychological* eudaimonism, roughly the claim that agents always do pursue some conception of their own interest. Claims about eudaimonism are sometimes expressed with insufficient care. Daniel Farnham identifies rational eudaimonism with "formal egoism", understood as the thesis that a person's "ultimate good" consists in "acting on the reasons that apply to her". So understood, rational eudaimonism treats acting on the reasons that apply to an agent as a sufficient condition of achieving her good. Yet if this is correct, ancient accounts that treat external goods as necessary to *eudaimonia* will fail to satisfy this definition, for presumably an agent who is unlucky in her circumstances may nonetheless act on the reasons that apply to her. See D. Farnham, 'A Good Kind of Egoism', *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, 40 (2006), 33-50 at 33.

²⁴ I am assuming, roughly, that reasons are those facts or true propositions that justify rational action. It has been suggested that the Stoics do not employ a theory of reasons [see, e.g., K. Vogt, *Law, Reason and the Cosmic City* (Oxford 2008), 177n45], but the Stoics surely do employ a theory of practical reason and rationality. If this is granted, it is difficult to see how they could fail also to employ some notion of reasons, understood as the set of considerations to which an informed rational agent will respond. It is perhaps worth pointing out that '*to aition eschaton*' and '*causa finalis*' regularly refer in ancient literature to considerations adduced to justify action in relation to some putatively rational end. See, for instance, H. Bonitz, *Index Aristotelicus* (Berolini, 1955), 22-23 (*aitia*). Cf. also M. Frede, 'Introduction', in M. Frede and G. Striker (eds.), *Rationality in Greek Thought* (Oxford, 1996), 1-28. For further relevant discussion, see T. Irwin, 'Anachronism and the Concept of Morality', in M. van Ackeren and J. Müller (eds.), *Antike Philosophie verstehen / Understanding Ancient Philosophy* (Darmstadt, 2006), 149-66. For a suggestive Stoic use of '*ratio*' in the plural, see Seneca, *Ep.* 66.32.

²⁵ "In Platonism and Stoicism, and in Greek moral philosophy generally, but *one* regulative and governing faculty is recognized under the name of Reason -- however the regulation of Reason may be understood; in the modern ethical view, when it has worked itself clear, there are found to be *two* -- Universal Reason and Egoistic Reason, or Conscience and Self-love". See H. Sidgwick, *Outlines of the History of Ethics* (New York, 1892), 197ff. Gregory Vlastos characterizes the "Eudaimonist Axiom" as the claim that "happiness is desired by all human beings as the ultimate end (*telos*) of all their rational acts". See G. Vlastos, 'Happiness', 203. Irwin identifies rational eudaimonism as the thesis that happiness provides "the only ultimate justifying reason". See T. Irwin, *Plato's Moral Theory* (Oxford 1977), 53. Cf. also T. Irwin, *Plato's Ethics* (Oxford 1995), 52-5. For some recent criticisms of Sidgwick's interpretive claim, see N. White, *Individual and Conflict in Greek Ethics* ['*Conflict*'] (Oxford, 2002). Other relevant, recent discussion includes J. Annas, 'Prudence and Morality in Ancient and Modern Philosophy' ['Prudence'], *Ethics*, 105 (1995), 241-57; T. Irwin, 'Prudence and Morality in Greek Ethics', *Ethics*, 105 (1995), 284-95; N. White, 'Conflicting Parts of Happiness in Aristotle's Ethics' ['Aristotle's Ethics'], *Ethics*, 105 (1995), 258-83; T. Irwin, review of White, *Ethics*, 114 (2004), 848-58.

Aristotle, Stoic eudaimonism may be construed as a broad form of rational egoism. If it is mistaken, ancient theories including Stoicism may hold that considerations falling outside the sphere of self-interest, broadly construed, may provide an agent with justificatory reasons for action.²⁶

Though rational eudaimonism as Sidgwick characterizes it is committed to a broadly self-interested conception of practical rationality, it need not be committed to a narrow or self-confined account of an agent's self-interest. If we suppose, as some contemporary accounts of ancient eudaimonism do, that the welfare of others is an essential component of one's own happiness, an agent may be justified in acting so as to benefit others, for the sake of benefiting others. Sidgwick's formulation of rational eudaimonism requires only that the considerations comprising a complete justification of action involve some reference to the agent's own well-being. Thus a rational agent who wishes to offer a complete defense of her actions will be obliged, if pressed, to refer finally to her own welfare.²⁷ But she may nonetheless act so as to benefit others, and she may plausibly do so from motives that express a morally appropriate regard for others. Sidgwick's account suggests an agent-relational account of reasons but leaves the content of the motives and actions enjoined by such reasons unspecified.

Since no particular account of motivation is entailed by an agent-relational conception of rational justification, then, this account of rational eudaimonism is generally compatible with a range of motivational theories that do not require that the

²⁷ Cf. G. Vlastos, 'Happiness', 203: "to say that happiness is the *telos* of all our actions is not to say that this is what we are always, or often, thinking of when choosing what to do in our daily life, but only that this is the last of the reasons we could give if pressed to give our reason for choosing to do anything at all -- the only one which, if given, would make it senseless to be asked for a further reason". For a mildly dissenting view, see G. Striker, 'Greek Ethics and Moral Theory', in G. Striker, *Essays on Hellenistic Ethics and Epistemology* (Cambridge, 1996), 169-82 at 170-73. Striker assumes that a commitment to eudaimonism implies "(a) that there is a general answer to the question: What sort of life can count as a good life for humans? (b) that every human being desires to live a good life, and (c) that we do or should plan all our actions in such a way that they lead or contribute to such a life" (171). These constraints may seem to entail at least some minimal claims about the character of intention and motivation.

motives of a rational agent be self-regarding in any obviously objectionable sense. To give but one possible example of such a theory, it is open to Sidgwick's eudaimonist to understand the structure of rational motivation in terms of first and second-order desires.²⁸ On such an account, a rational agent might entertain a first-order desire to benefit others consistently with a rational, second-order desire to realize her own happiness through the satisfaction of first-order aims. Though such a background desire has the agent's own happiness as its object, it is nonetheless plausible to suppose that the particular beliefs and desires that ordinarily figure in her deliberations and most directly explain her actions will not refer to self at all. Supposing that her first-order desires have the benefit of others as their object, such an agent might usually or even always offer a proximate justification of her actions that proceeds in other-regarding terms. Sidgwick's account of rational eudaimonism requires only that a complete or ultimate justification refer to the elements of the agent's own good, and this is compatible with altruistic forms of motivation whose object is the welfare of another.²⁹

Though this explanation of ancient eudaimonism remains central to a number of contemporary interpretations, it is not uncontroversial as an account of ancient ethics as a whole, and many commentators hold that at least some ancient theories reject it.³⁰ While acknowledging that the notion of *eudaimonia* plays a basic role in ancient ethical theory, they argue that a complete rational justification need not advert to the agent's own *eudaimonia* at all. There are at least three ways in which the scope

²⁸ Importantly, this is distinct from the claim that facts about desire necessarily play a role in *explaining* why action and motivation are rational.

²⁹ It appears to be compatible, for instance, with Nagel's characterization of altruism as "a willingness to act in consideration of the interests of other persons, without the need of ulterior motives", though this falls short of "pure altruism", as Nagel goes on to characterize it. See T. Nagel, *The Possibility of Altruism* (Oxford, 1970), 79-80. I discuss Nagel's characterization at greater length in Chapter 5.

³⁰ See especially N. White, *Conflict*. Cf. also L. Brown, 'Glaucon's Challenge, Rational Egoism and Ordinary Morality', in D. Cairns, F. Herrmann and T. Penner (eds.), *Pursuing The Good* (Edinburgh, 2007), 42-60.

of rational justification and that of the agent's *eudaimonia* might be thought to come apart. We might suppose, first, that although every rational action is one that promotes *eudaimonia*, the relevant conception of *eudaimonia* is not that of the agent's own. Thus Jennifer Whiting has suggested, both in connection with Aristotle's theory and in connection with the Stoics, that ancient accounts of *eudaimonia* may incorporate agent-neutral forms of justification.³¹ This suggestion does not divorce the scope of practical reason from the concept of *eudaimonia* in general, but it does divorce it from the concept of the agent's *eudaimonia* in particular. Though rational action may aim to promote one's own *eudaimonia*, it also aims to promote the *eudaimonia* of others as such. So understood, rational eudaimonism can accommodate the sort of agent-neutral reasons which impartial conceptions of rationality are sometimes thought to require. On such an account, practical rationality may be directly responsive to ultimate, other-regarding considerations, a possibility Sidgwick's interpretation excludes.

A second possible interpretation might hold that although an agent's own well-being is not the only rational aim she may have, other rational aims will *reinforce*, rather than conflict with, the aim of promoting her own happiness. Though this view posits more than one final end or justificatory ground of rational action, it understands these ends as agreeing in what they recommend. Roger Crisp defends an account of Socratic eudaimonism along these lines. According to Crisp, Socrates believes that human agents have reason to do both what promotes their own happiness and also what the gods command. Crisp also understands Socrates to believe that, since virtuous action always satisfies both of these rational requirements, neither

³¹ See J. Whiting, 'Eudaimonia, External Results, and Choosing Virtuous Actions for Themselves', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 65 (2002), 270-90; J. Whiting, 'Impersonal Friends', *The Monist*, 74 (1991), 3-29. Though I disagree with Whiting's view for reasons given below, I am grateful to her for suggesting in conversation that the *eudaimonia* for the sake of which one acts need not be the agent's own, in the Stoic view.

requirement can ever conflict with the other. The virtuous course of action is rational both because it is the way to realize *eudaimonia* and because it is what the gods happen to require. On this interpretation, all rational action supports a particular counterfactual analysis. If one of the rational requirements it satisfies failed to obtain, an agent would nonetheless have reason to act virtuously because of the other requirement.³² On this view, Socrates believes that the virtuous course of action is not only rational but also rationally *over-determined*.

A third line of interpretation might hold both that one's own *eudaimonia* is not the only rational aim of action and that other rational aims may sometimes conflict with this aim. According to Richard Kraut, for instance, Aristotle allows that considerations unconnected to one's own happiness may count as independent reasons for action, and that these reasons may sometimes conflict with what the agent's happiness requires.³³ In a similar vein, Nicholas White argues that the Greeks quite generally were more inclined than Sidgwick believes to acknowledge the possibility of conflicting rational ends.³⁴ On White's view, ancient Greek theories reject both the assumption that *eudaimonia* is inclusive in the sense of embracing all the objectives an agent may have reason to promote, and the assumption that these objectives will never require conflicting courses of action.³⁵ Though differing in their characterization of alternative rational aims, each of these three views at least rejects the supposition that an agent's own *eudaimonia* is the sole, ultimate ground of rational justification. If any of them is correct, Sidgwick's general characterization of ancient conceptions of practical rationality as both monistic and self-interested must be rejected.

³² R. Crisp, 'Socrates and Aristotle on Happiness and Virtue' ['Socrates'], in R. Heinaman (ed.), *Plato and Aristotle's Ethics* (Ashgate 2003), 55-78 at 55.

³³ See, e.g., R. Kraut, 'Aristotle on the Human Good: An Overview' in Nancy Sherman (ed.), *Aristotle's Ethics: Critical Essays* (New York, 1999), 79-104; R. Kraut, *Aristotle on the Human Good*, (Princeton, 1989), Chapter 2.

³⁴ See N. White, *Conflict*, Chapters 1-2.

³⁵ See N. White, 'Aristotle's Ethics' and *Conflict*, Chapters 1-3.

1.3 Internalist and externalist accounts of rational justification

A second distinction marks a further focus of debate about practical reasoning that has also been the focus of several recent discussions of Stoic ethics. Regardless of whether the fully rational agent acts ultimately to secure her own interest, we may ask whether any of the reasons that justify her actions are independent of her motivational psychology, or whether justifying reasons are always to be explained, at least in part, through a connection to her motivations. On a broadly internalist account of practical rationality, any consideration that counts as a normative or justificatory reason must be one the agent herself would endorse as such under appropriate circumstances.³⁶ It must be a consideration, that is to say, that could in principle move her to action. On such a view every justifying reason an agent has will depend, in the final analysis, on the content of her psychological states. These states needn't be her actual beliefs or desires, nor even those of any actual agent, for on some internalist theories they are the psychological states that only an ideally consistent and maximally informed agent would have.³⁷ But on any internalist view, all justificatory reasons for action are to be explained through a substantive connection to the motivations of the agent to whom they apply.³⁸

³⁶ The literature on the topic is vast. For some representative discussion, see S. Darwall, *Impartial Reason* (Ithaca, 1983); C. Korsgaard, 'Skepticism about Practical Reason', *Journal of Philosophy*, 83 (1986), 5-25; B. Hooker, 'Williams's Argument against External Reasons', *Analysis*, 47 (1987), 42-4; J. McDowell, 'Might There Be External Reasons?', in J. Altham and R. Harrison (eds.), *World, Mind and Ethics: Essays on the Ethical Philosophy of Bernard Williams* (Cambridge, 1995), 68-85; B. Williams, 'Internal Reasons and the Obscurity of Blame', in B. Williams, *Making Sense of Humanity* (Cambridge 1995), 35-45; J. Broome and D. Parfit, 'Reasons and Motivation', *Aristotelian Society*, supplementary vol. lxxi (1997), 99-130; W. Fitzpatrick, 'Reasons, Value, and Particular Agents: Normative Relevance without Motivational Internalism' ['Relevance'], *Mind*, 113 (2004), 285-318; M. Smith, 'Internal Reasons', in *Ethics and the A Priori* (Cambridge, 2004), 17-42. P. Pettit and M. Smith, 'External Reasons', in C. Macdonald and G. Macdonald (eds.), *McDowell and His Critics* (Oxford, 2007), 142-69; M. Schroeder, 'The Humean Theory of Reasons', *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*, 2 (2007), 195-219.

³⁷ This is sometimes described as a distinction between *actual* and *counterfactual* versions of internalism.

³⁸ Cf., e.g., D. Parfit and J. Broome, 'Reasons and Motivation', *Aristotelian Society*, supplementary vol. vxxi (1997), 99-130 at 102: The internalist holds that "we have reason to do something" *because* "if we knew the relevant facts, and deliberated in a way that was *procedurally* rational, we would be motivated to do this thing". Here and throughout, I have characterized as internalist only those views that are

By contrast, a broadly non-Humean or externalist account does not regard the content of an agent's psychological states as a universal constraint on the content of her normative reasons. On an externalist theory, at least some of the reasons an agent has need not be explained either by her actual motivational psychology or by anything she might come to believe or desire under suitably idealized conditions. An agent who fails to care about moral considerations may nonetheless have reason to act as those considerations require. Internalists and externalists about reasons can agree about the course of action that practical reason prescribes and which a maximally rational agent will take. But they differ in at least one fundamental respect: an externalist view may explain the rationality of at least some actions and motives without reference to psychological considerations. An internalist account, by contrast, supposes that every consideration that counts as a reason for an agent requires an explanatory connection to some motivation on her part.³⁹ Accordingly, we might broadly characterize internalist accounts as attempting to "reduce normative reasons to motivating reasons" and externalist accounts as attempting to resist such a reduction.⁴⁰

The distinction between internalist and externalist accounts of practical reason is directly relevant to discussions of ancient eudaimonism. If Sidgwick is correct to suppose that an agent's own *eudaimonia* is the only ultimate source of the reasons that apply to her, the question whether these reasons are to be understood in the externalist or internalist sense will depend on whether the content of *eudaimonia* itself is objectively or subjectively conceived. Should *eudaimonia* turn out to consist in

committed to this strong explanatory claim. Though views asserting only a weaker, material coincidence of reasons and motivation in the fully rational agent are occasionally characterized as internalist, I take it that this thesis alone does not amount to an internalist commitment in any interesting sense.

³⁹ This is not to say that facts about an agent's psychology need figure as part of the *content* of her reasons. This is a further, substantive assumption that some internalist theories (e.g. Mark Schroeder's) reject, but on all internalist theories, a full explanation of why a given consideration counts as a reason for the agent will refer to facts about her motivation.

⁴⁰ For this way of expressing the internalist position, see S. Darwall, review of Hampton's *The Authority of Reason*, *The Philosophical Review*, 109 (2000), 583-86 at 584.

nothing other than the satisfaction of an agent's preferences and desires, for instance, then the content of her reasons will depend, in turn, on the content of her preferences and desires. By contrast, if substantive elements of an agent's *eudaimonia* are fixed independently of her psychology, at least some of her reasons will not be explained by her actual or idealized motivations. Conjoined to Sidgwick's account of rational eudaimonism, a subjective conception of *eudaimonia* naturally supports an internalist conception of practical reason, while an objective conception implies an externalist picture. If an agent has reason to act only insofar as the action furthers her own good, practical reasons will naturally be construed along internalist or externalist lines according to whether her good is subjectively or objectively conceived.

Finally, the distinction between self-interested and non-self-interested accounts of reason intersects the distinction between internalist and externalist account, for regardless of whether we believe that practical reason is self-interested or impartial in what it recommends, we may ask whether the rationality of pursuing a course of action is ultimately explained by its fit with an agent's motivations.⁴¹ This pair of distinctions therefore gives us four broad ways of construing the structure of practical reason consistently with the framework of eudaimonist ethics: We might suppose that ultimate justificatory reasons (1) depend wholly on the content of an agent's *eudaimonia*, where this is explained by reference to her psychological states, (2) depend wholly on the content of *eudaimonia*, where this is not so explained, (3) depend on considerations beyond the scope of an agent's *eudaimonia*, whose rational force depends on her psychological states or (4) depend on considerations beyond the scope of an agent's *eudaimonia*, whose rational force does not depend on her

⁴¹ Since Kant understands hypothetical imperatives in terms of inclination, a psychological state, the latter distinction corresponds broadly to the Kantian distinction between categorical and hypothetical imperatives. See, e.g. *Groundwork*, 414 (Acad. ed.). Cf. D. Brink, 'Kantian Rationalism: Inescapability, Authority, and Supremacy' ['Rationalism'], in G. Cullity and B. Gaut (eds.), *Ethics and Practical Reason*, Oxford (1997), 255-91 at 259-61.

psychology.⁴² As broad characterizations of rational eudaimonism, these possibilities are jointly exhaustive. Any account that takes *eudaimonia* to be at least one of the final aims of rational deliberation and action must fall into one of these categories.

Two further preliminary points are perhaps worth noting. First, none of these characterizations depends on any empirical assumption about the content or even the existence of justificatory reasons. Each is rather a thesis about *what could count* as a justificatory reason for action, that is, about the character of the considerations an agent would have to invoke in order to defend her actions on rational grounds.⁴³

Second, none of these accounts entails any specific thesis either about the nature of motivation or about the intentional descriptions under which a rational agent must act. Though (1) and (3) assume that reasons must refer to an agent's own psychology, neither implies that a rational agent, in deliberating, must consult her own motivational states or even of be aware of the particular reasons she has. Whether or not these further conclusions are plausible, both require an additional substantive assumption.⁴⁴ A theory of practical reason, as such, need not imply anything about the psychology of rational action.

Finally, since none of these characterizations assumes any substantive account of *eudaimonia*, each of them is consistent with some form of rational requirement to benefit others. Rational eudaimonism as I have described it thus far might be said to impose a formal rather than substantive constraint. Though it requires that the ultimate description under which actions are justified be agent-relative, it leaves a

⁴² Though not eudaimonist in form, Kantian views apparently fall into this category, since (very roughly) in Kant's view categorical reasons are to be explained by formal or constitutive requirements of practical reason, not by the contingent aims or desires of particular agents. If Stoicism is a sort of proto-Kantianism, we might expect the Stoics to adhere to a version of (4), but, as I argue, they do not.

⁴³ Cf. W. Fitzpatrick, 'Relevance', 292-94.

⁴⁴ Even on broadly Humean accounts, according to which practical reasons are explained by desires, it remains controversial both whether the reasons themselves must refer to these desires and, if so, whether the rational agent who deliberates must *think about* the reasons she has. For recent discussion of these further assumptions, see, e.g., M. Schroeder, *Slaves of the Passions* (Oxford, 2007), Chapter 2; K. Setiya, *Reasons without Rationalism* (Princeton, 2007), 17-18.

concrete account of the agent's benefit unspecified. This is not to concede, however, that it does not matter whether the Stoics take themselves to be offering a formally self-interested account. If we wish to understand how the Stoics conceive of ethical foundations, how this conception affects their ethical conclusions, how Stoic ethics compares to other theories, or how Stoicism may have influenced the subsequent history of ethics, such differences may matter a good deal.

1.4 Interpretations of Stoic ethics

Before turning to a positive account of the Stoic position, it is worth noting that at least three of the four characterizations of practical reason I have distinguished have been associated more or less explicitly with the Stoic view (and the fourth has sometimes been implied). We might fairly say that those ascribing a broadly self-interested conception of practical reason to the Stoics include Sidgwick, Adam Smith, Joseph Butler, Thomas Reid, and Kant.⁴⁵ More recently, Max Pohlenz, Tad Brennan, Brad Inwood and (sometimes) Julia Annas have defended versions of this reading, implying that justificatory reasons are relative to an agent's happiness, in the Stoic view. Of these broadly self-interested interpretations, those of Kant and (again sometimes) Annas appear to suppose that any account of *eudaimonia* in general, and *a fortiori* the Stoic account in particular, will be constrained by the content of the agent's psychological states.⁴⁶ In identifying ancient eudaimonism generally with views that make moral justification depend on inclination, Kant appears to count the

⁴⁵ For a recent, relevant discussion of Kant's understanding of eudaimonism, see T. Irwin, 'Kant's Criticisms of Eudaimonism' ['Criticisms'], in S. Engstrom and J. Whiting (eds.), *Aristotle, Kant and the Stoics* (Cambridge, 1996), 63-101. It will be evident here and elsewhere that I owe much to this study. Cf. also D. Brink, 'Rationalism', 259ff.

⁴⁶ Without wishing to be uncharitable, I have included Annas in both categories on the basis of conflicting characterizations she gives. In the *Morality of Happiness*, Annas treats the Stoics as eudaimonists while also suggesting that moral reasons override prudential ones, in their view. As I explain in Chapter 5, the latter claim significantly distorts the Stoic account.

Stoic theory as both self-interested and internalist.⁴⁷ Annas similarly maintains that any conception of *eudaimonia* relevant to ethical theory must be “endorsed from the perspective of the agent”.⁴⁸ Since this endorsement constraint places internalist restrictions on an account of the agent’s well-being, Annas appears in at least some of her work to agree with Kant in construing eudaimonist reasons in a broadly internalist way.⁴⁹

On the other hand, a number of recent interpretations of Stoicism have departed with varying degrees of explicitness from a self-interested characterization of Stoic rationality. Some commentators, though nominally recognizing Stoic ethics as eudaimonist in form, suggest that the Stoics nonetheless endorse a broadly impartial conception of practical reason. Sometimes this conception is characterized in explicitly Kantian terms. According to Julia Annas, “the Stoics stress the Kantian idea that morality and the force of its reasons are different in kind from other kinds of goals and the force of their reasons”.⁵⁰ Annas suggests that “the fully virtuous Stoic will ignore, as irrelevant, differences between people that are not sanctioned by the rational point of view and will thus come to have no more concern for his own interests, from the moral point of view, than for any other rational being”.⁵¹ In a similar vein, M.M. McCabe supposes that the Stoics endorse an “imperative to altruism” that transcends selfishness “by showing that there is another source of the demand that we act

⁴⁷ Cf. *supra*, n42 and 45.

⁴⁸ I discuss this claim in the chapter to follow.

⁴⁹ Nicholas White may appear to assume a similar account. In supposing that “deontic” notions mark a contrast with eudaimonism, he sometimes seems to suggest that appeals to *eudaimonia* depend on an appeal to inclination or “attraction” on the part of the agent, and hence contrast meaningfully with categorical requirements or “imperativity”, as he calls it. See N. White, *Conflict*, Chapter 3. Cf. T. Irwin, review of White, *Ethics*, 114 (2004), 849-58.

⁵⁰ *Morality*, 171. In this case, Annas may seem to lose sight of the internalist characterization of eudaimonism she elsewhere accepts.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 173.

altruistically."⁵² McCabe characterizes Stoic rationality as embracing "the view from nowhere" and attributes to Chrysippus a theory that insists "on the moral autonomy of the other person." C.C.W Taylor similarly speaks of the "strongly Stoic overtones of [Kant's] theory."⁵³

Other commentators who appear more cautious about comparisons with Kant and the Kantian tradition nonetheless imply that the Stoicism somehow departs from rational eudaimonism as I have described it. Some commentators, for instance, seem straightforwardly to deny that only what promotes an agent's *eudaimonia* can justify her action, according to the Stoics. A.A. Long, who elsewhere underscores the Stoics' commitment to eudaimonism, writes that in the Stoic view the "pursuit of virtue proves to be a moral obligation, independent of the fact that it is also in one's interests".⁵⁴ Michael Frede suggests that one reason one ought to conform to nature, according to the Stoics, "is precisely that this is what nature means us to do".⁵⁵ Rejecting the broadly self-interested account of Stoicism defended by Pohlenz, Nicholas White holds that Stoic ethics cannot accurately be described as a "self-realizationist" view. Irwin, who emphasizes the Stoic commitment to a form of eudaimonism in the tradition of Plato and Aristotle, nevertheless suggests that considerations that make no difference to the Stoic agent's happiness may provide her with (apparently ultimate) rational grounds for regret.⁵⁶ Some of these commentators

⁵² M.M. McCabe, 'Two Accounts', 413-44 at 432. As McCabe goes on to say, "Identify! comes from Chrysippus; and it rests on the account of the self demanded by his approach to responsibility and justice" (441).

⁵³ C. Taylor, 'Hellenistic Ethics', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 5 (1987), 235-45 at 239.

⁵⁴ A. Long, 'Basis', 145.

⁵⁵ M. Frede, 'Good', 81.

⁵⁶ Irwin's view is complex. As I understand him, Irwin maintains that the rational Stoic agent will regret a virtuous failure to secure some preferred indifferents, even if this failure does not disturb her happiness in any way. Irwin argues that the Stoics "do not reject eudaimonism" and that they "assert that we have reason to value virtue and virtuous action as a non-instrumental good if and only if we regard them as part of happiness". See *The Development of Ethics* vol. i [*Development*], (Oxford, 2007), 287-89. Yet Irwin elsewhere asserts that the eudaimonist formula that fits Plato and Aristotle fits the Stoics "only if 'end' is taken in their technical sense (for the *telos* as distinct from the *prokeimenon*)" (See T. Irwin, 'Criticisms', 63-101 at 95n1). But the *telos* does not appear to be distinct

also appear to suggest that Stoic ethical theory appeals directly to the rational order of nature to justify its claims. Since on these views of Stoicism rational justification is relative neither to an agent's psychology nor to a conception of her own happiness, interpretations along these lines appear to attribute to the Stoics a broadly impartial and externalist account.

The remainder of the present chapter argues that, as Sidgwick suggests, no consideration outside the scope of an agent's own good can constitute an ultimate justification of her actions, according to Stoic theory. This account has two elements. It holds both that every rational action is one that in fact promotes the agent's own *eudaimonia* and that it is rational only *because* it promotes the agent's own *eudaimonia*. Accordingly, in what follows I reject each of the three alternatives to this position considered above. I argue that Stoic theory regards the relevant conception of *eudaimonia* as the agent's own and that it treats this conception as the only ultimate ground of rational justification.

1.5 Evidence for the Stoic view

Some of the most explicit formulations of ancient eudaimonism appear in the surviving summaries of Stoic ethics. On their face, these statements seem to support the account articulated by Sidgwick. The Stoics clearly affirm, for example, that every appropriate action will be done for the sake of *eudaimonia* and that *eudaimonia* is not itself sought for the sake of anything further.⁵⁷ They claim that *eudaimonia* is

from the *prokeimenon*, on the Stoic account. See Stob. *Ecl.* 2.99 (SVF 1.216). Cf. also Mar. Ant., *Med.* 5.14, where practical reason is said to be directed at the *prokeimenon telos*. Here Marcus uses '*prokeimenon*' just as Cicero (*Fin.* 3.16), and Seneca (*Ep.* 71.2, 85.32) use *propositum*, to describe a proposed result (right action) that is up to the agent to secure. For these textual reasons and the conceptual reasons explained below and in Chapter 4, I doubt the Stoics employed the technical sense Irwin identifies. Cf. *infra*, Chapter 5n350.

⁵⁷ E.g., Stob. *Ecl.* 2.77 (SVF 3.16), Philo de Moysse 3.2.158 (SVF 3.10). For a direct reference to Chrysippus' eudaimonism, see Plutarch, *Stoic. repugn.* 1035c.

that to which everything in life is appropriately referred but which is not itself referred to anything further.⁵⁸ In identifying *eudaimonia* with virtue, the Stoics associate it with a range of normative and justificatory predicates, such as ‘fine’ (*kalon/honestum*) and ‘good’ (*agathon/bonum*), which they explicitly restrict to virtue alone. These formulations naturally suggest that the Stoics mean to restrict the scope of rational justification to that which promotes *eudaimonia*.⁵⁹

Two additional points support this impression. First, the Stoics claim that *eudaimonia* is the final object of *orexis*.⁶⁰ They define *orexis*, in turn, as a species of rational motivation whose object is the good, and they appear to confine it, as Ian Kidd notes, “to the rational impulse of the wise man”.⁶¹ Thus in the Stoic view at least one basic form of rational motivation is explicitly restricted to whatever satisfies the concept of happiness. Second, the Stoics say that every appropriate (*kathêkon*) action is done for the sake of the *telos* and takes this as its standard or reference point.⁶² Since in the Stoic view an appropriate action is one for which a rational defense is available, these texts make it clear that every action for which a rational defense can be given must be justified, at least in part, by its relation to the *telos* of happiness. These points show that *eudaimonia* enters into Stoic theory as at least one rational ground of practical action to which every ultimate, justifying explanation must

⁵⁸ E.g., Stob. *Ecl.* 2.46 (SVF 3.2).

⁵⁹ *Eudaimonia* is sometimes identified with *to telikon agathon*, the final good. See Stob. *Ecl.* 2.76, SVF 3.3.

⁶⁰ Stob. *Ecl.* 2.76, SVF 3.3; *Michaël in Eth. Nicom.* (CAG, vol. xx), ed. Heylb. 599.6 (SVF 3.17). Cf. also SVF 3.169, 3.441, 3.442, 3.438 suggesting that, as Kidd puts it, the “Stoics appear to have confined the technical use of *orexis* to the rational impulse of the wise man”. See I. Kidd, *Posidonius*, vol. ii (Cambridge, 1988), 569-70.

⁶¹ *Orexis* is a *hormê logikê* directed at what is good *de dicto* in the case of fools, who (according to Epictetus) may misapply it, but exclusively at what is good *de re* in sages, who never do. For discussion of these points, see I. Kidd, *Posidonius*, vol. iii, (Cambridge, 1988), 569- 70. It is also worth noting that Chrysippus restricts the rational appetite of the *logistikon* (i.e., the rational *hêgemonikon*) to the fine alone. See I. Kidd, *Posidonius*, vol. ii, (Cambridge, 1988), 211 (fr. 160).

⁶² Stob. *Ecl.* 2.46 (SVF 3.2); *Ecl.* 3.16 (SVF 3.16).

refer.⁶³ As a minimal condition of practical rationality, then, every rational action or motive must at least further the agent's own *eudaimonia*. These formulations suggest that the form of eudaimonism Kraut attributes to Aristotle (according to which an action that does not promote the agent's own happiness at all may nonetheless be rational on other grounds), does not apply to the Stoics.

I think it is natural to understand these Stoic formulations as also implying the stronger claim that an agent's *own* happiness is the *only* ultimate end or object in virtue of which an action may be rational, thereby confirming Sidgwick's judgment that Stoic eudaimonism is both monistic and broadly egoistic in form. This conclusion would exclude both of the remaining alternatives to Sidgwick's interpretation. By themselves, however, these texts do not quite establish the stronger claim. In the first place, there is nothing in them to show conclusively that the relevant conception of *eudaimonia* is the *agent's own*. It is at least consistent with the formulations I have cited to suppose that, as Whiting suggests, the relevant conception of the end of practical reason may include the *eudaimonia* of others. Second, there is nothing in them to show that *eudaimonia* is the *only* ultimate ground of rational action. That is to say, the texts I have mentioned do not quite foreclose the possibility that although every rational action necessarily refers to an agent's *eudaimonia*, there is yet some further objective in virtue of which an action may also be rational. Even if every rational action promotes an agent's happiness, this might not be the *only* feature in virtue of which it is justified. We might suppose that something similar to Crisp's view of Socrates applies to the Stoics: even if the Stoics assume a harmony among eudaimonist and non-eudaimonist reasons, the rationality of action and belief might in some cases be over-determined.

⁶³ Though even this much is not clearly accepted by commentators. In Frede's view, one Stoic answer to the question what reason one has to act as nature intends is not that this is what happiness requires but that "this is what nature means us to do". See M. Frede, 'Good', 81.

The latter possibility needs to be considered carefully, for more than one commentator has raised it in connection with the Stoics. Gisela Striker may seem to suggest it, for instance, when she writes that in “Stoic theory, natural things are of no value for the goal of life, but at most for a natural life”.⁶⁴ If the Stoics conceive of the “natural life” as Striker intends it as an independent source of value, it is natural to suppose them to believe there to be independent reasons for pursuing the natural life, even if these reasons are not rooted in a contribution to *eudaimonia*. Irwin attributes a view of this sort more explicitly to the Stoics, suggesting that the Stoics “do not recognize two ends; but they recognize two objects of ultimate concern, virtue and the life according to nature”.⁶⁵ On many conceptions of rational justification, which preserve a link between value and reasons for action, these claims suggest that both the value of a natural life and the reasons one has for pursuing it do not depend exclusively on the value of *eudaimonia*. In this way they appear to depart from the conventional view articulated by Sidgwick.

1.6 Stoic eudaimonism and the scope of rational justification

Though these alternatives to Sidgwick’s view cannot be ruled out merely by appealing to the statements of Stoic eudaimonism I have noted, I believe they can be ruled out on other grounds. The suggestion that it is rational to promote the *eudaimonia* of others as well as of oneself is at least recognized in ancient literature.⁶⁶ Yet whether or not it is the correct view to take of Aristotle’s theory, it cannot be correct in the case of the Stoics, for the assumption that *eudaimonia* is to be

⁶⁴ See G. Striker, ‘Antipater, or the Art of Living’, in *Essays on Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics* (Cambridge 1996), 298-315 at 304. Cf. also G. Striker, ‘Following Nature’, *ibid.*, 221-80 at 124.

⁶⁵ See T. Irwin, ‘Stoic and Aristotelian Conceptions of Happiness’ [‘Conceptions’], in M. Schofield and G. Striker (eds.), *The Norms of Nature: Studies in Hellenistic Ethics* (Cambridge, 1986), 205-44 at 236.

⁶⁶ Cf. Augustine’s summary of Varro’s classification of two hundred and eighty-eight possible accounts of the supreme good at *De civ. D.* 19.1.

understood in an agent-neutral sense renders some of the most central controversies of Hellenistic ethics unintelligible. If the conception of *eudaimonia* invoked by Hellenistic theories were not the agent's own, for instance, there would be little point in trying to defend the claim that the sage retains her own *eudaimonia* on the rack. Were the relevant conception of happiness invoked by Hellenistic theories agent-neutral, an obvious and compelling response to the objection that Stoic or Epicurean sages will find themselves miserable under torture would be to point out that one's own happiness is not the only thing a rational agent has to consider. Yet the possibility of this rejoinder is never so much as acknowledged, as far as I am aware, in the many ancient references to this debate. This rather succinct consideration seems nevertheless to tell conclusively against the suggestion that the Stoics invoke an agent-neutral account of *eudaimonia* itself.⁶⁷

The second alternative to the traditional view is less easy to dismiss. It is also an attractive reading of Stoicism in some respects. Irwin, for instance, relies on the claim that the Stoics do not regard happiness as the only rational objective to show that the Stoic view of emotion is less extreme than has sometimes been thought. On Irwin's account, though the loss of external goods does not affect the sage's *eudaimonia*, the sage will nevertheless have reason to regret this loss insofar as she has reason to care about the life according to nature, even when a failure to realize this life in the fullest sense makes no difference to her own *eudaimonia*. But a number of considerations seem to count against this view of Stoic theory.⁶⁸ One consideration is merely an *ex silentio* appeal. No Stoic source, to my knowledge, ever suggests that

⁶⁷ A more general reason to reject this view is that it is unclear how a Stoic *could* act for the sake of the *eudaimonia* of others. On the Stoic account, this can consist in nothing other than an agent's own virtue, which is up to the agent alone.

⁶⁸ I discuss some of these at greater length in Chapter 4.

actions may be justified with respect to anything other than what contributes to the *telos* of happiness, as virtue alone is said to do.

A few texts, moreover, do appear to be explicit on this point. Characterizing the Stoic view, Alexander says that preferred indifferents are selected for the sake of virtue alone.⁶⁹ Since he is arguing against the Stoic claim that virtue is sufficient for happiness, it is natural to understand him to mean that, on the Stoic account, they are selected *only* for the sake of virtue and not for their own sakes as well. If the Stoics did not believe that preferred indifferents are selected for the sake of virtue alone, Alexander could have little reason to quarrel with their view. A charitable reading of Alexander's argument must suppose that the Stoics and Peripatetics differed substantively on this score. Augustine, summarizing Marcus Varro's classification of possible accounts of the final good, explicitly distinguishes a conception of end according to which preferred indifferents are desirable only for the sake of virtue from one in which both virtue and what is preferred are desirable for their own sakes, and the former conception seems clearly intended to express the Stoic account.⁷⁰ Seneca, considering the possibility that a mixed account of the end might be superior to the Stoic account, says that the Stoic wise man does nothing for the sake of pleasure (*causa voluptatis*).⁷¹ Since pleasure is classed among those objects that accord with nature, then on the assumption that the Sage acts both for the sake of virtue and for the independently rational objective of conforming to nature, Seneca's statement here would appear to be false.⁷²

⁶⁹ E.g. *Mantissa* 164.3: "For neither does any other craft select anything for the sake of selecting itself alone" (trans. Sharples).

⁷⁰ *De civ. D* 19.1: "Now these four--pleasure, repose, the two together, the primary wants of nature (*prima naturae*)—exist in us in such a fashion that virtue (which education subsequently implants) is desirable for their sake, or they are desirable for the sake of virtue, or both for their own sakes" (trans. Greene). Cf. *Fin.* 5.20.

⁷¹ Seneca, *Vit. beat.* 11.1. Cf. *Vit. beat.* 9.4: "*Interrogas, quid petam ex virtute? Ipsam. Nihil enim habet melius, ipsa pretium sui.*"

⁷² On pleasure as a preferred indifferent, see DL 7.102.

Whether or not these texts are conclusive, there are further ways to test the suggestion that, in the Stoic view, what contributes to a natural life may provide practical reasons over and above the rational requirement to act virtuously. If this suggestion is accurate, then (as Irwin suggests) the sage who is unable to secure some preferred outcome that accords with nature will have some rational grounds for regretting this failure, even if it makes no difference to her happiness. Yet the Stoics do not appear to concede the rationality of such regret.⁷³ Seneca writes that the sage “is never filled with regret because at the time nothing better could have been done than was done, no better decision could have been made than was made”.⁷⁴ There is a final rationale, however, for supposing that the Stoics restrict the scope of practical reason to what contributes to *eudaimonia* alone. This is based on the Stoic claim that justice and virtue cannot be preserved if what is indifferent to virtue is reckoned as a genuine good. This claim appears to rest on the supposition that, provided that final rational weight is accorded to items other than virtue, one cannot eliminate the possibility that an agent will sometimes have overriding reason to act viciously. As I argue in Chapter Four, however, the Stoics cannot exclude the sort of rational conflict they wish to avoid merely by restricting the scope of *eudaimonia* to virtue while leaving independently rational objectives in place. So long as there are rational aims distinct from happiness, it is plausible to believe that what is required to secure these aims will sometimes conflict with the requirements of virtue. To ensure that a rational imperative to secure what is preferred will not conflict with virtue’s requirements, the

⁷³ The question whether the Stoics think it rational to regret the loss of indifferents is considered by both Irwin and Frede. Irwin holds that the Stoics think it rational. See, e.g., Irwin, 'Virtue, Praise and Success: Stoic Criticisms of Aristotelian Virtue' ['Criticisms'], *Monist* 73 (1990), 59-79; 'Socratic Paradox and Stoic Theory' ['Paradox'], in S. Everson (ed.) *Companions to Ancient Thought 4: Ethics* (Cambridge, 1998), 151-92; 'Stoic Inhumanity' in J. Sihvola and T. Engberg-Pederson (eds.) *The Emotions in Hellenistic Philosophy* (Dordrecht, 1998), 219-42; *Development*, 313-359. By contrast, Frede argues that “such an understanding of the Stoic position would be fundamentally mistaken”. See Frede, 'Good', 91.

⁷⁴ *Ben.* 4.34, trans. Basore. Cf. also *Ben.* 4.21 and 4.33.

Stoics must hold that *eudaimonia* consisting in virtue alone is single aim of rational human agents.

These considerations support Sidgwick's assessment of Stoic eudaimonism. In treating *eudaimonia* as the human *telos*, the Stoics hold that human action is rational only insofar as it contributes to this end. There is little to suggest either that the Stoic conception of *eudaimonia* is agent-neutral or that the Stoics posit some further rational objective distinct from it. Practical reason, as they conceive it, is formally self-interested, and the rational justification of motivation and action must ultimately be couched in agent-centered terms. Whether this account is satisfactory or whether it can amount to a moral theory in the fullest sense are questions beyond the scope of an interpretive account. It is worth noting, however, that a theory of rationality that explains reasons by their connection with an agent's interest may nonetheless support a wholly objective account of rationality. Such a theory is to be distinguished from a subjective account, which makes the content of an agents' reasons depend on her beliefs and motivations. In principle, such an account may prove far more damaging to the ideal of impartiality than an agent-relational view that is nonetheless objective. Chapter Two considers whether Stoicism implies a subjective conception of this sort, as some recent commentators have suggested.

CHAPTER 2

NATURE

2.1 Introduction

Arguments that appeal to facts about nature to defend ethical propositions encounter two familiar difficulties. First, there is the general difficulty of offering a coherent account of what it means for one state of affairs to be more natural than another. Second, supposing that such a natural priority can be defended, the project of showing that this priority has a claim on human behavior or that it could provide an ethical standard for humans to live by remains problematic. Modern attempts to base ethical injunctions on claims about what is natural have encountered objections along both of these lines. Thus the naturalism of Butler, to take one example, depends in part on his identification of actions in conformity with conscience as natural "in the highest and most proper sense".⁷⁵ Yet arguments identifying human nature with one principle over another are apt to appear arbitrary, as Butler himself acknowledges, in view of the plurality of motivations and actions that characterize human behavior.⁷⁶ And supposing that we accept a given analysis of what is natural, why conclude that humans should prefer the natural to the unnatural, or that what is most natural has a particular connection to the right or the good? In the absence of additional premises, attempts to infer conclusions about the best sort of human life from such an account encounters logical difficulties of the sort that prompted Hume's critique of inferences from *is* to *ought*.

Ancient theories that appeal to nature have sometimes been thought to possess distinctive resources for addressing these difficulties. For many ancient theories appear to rest, as most modern ones do not, upon a broader theory of teleological

⁷⁵ Sermon 2, Section 9.

⁷⁶ Cf. Sermon 2, Section 3 for one statement of this objection.

explanation.⁷⁷ A broader teleological theory may seem able to address the difficulties noted above, at least to a degree, for two reasons. First, such a theory might make possible a meaningful, independent account of what is natural for an organism, since an account of the organism's nature may be spelled out in teleological terms.⁷⁸ Second, it might be thought that because the notion of an organism's end or *telos* is already a normative one, theories appealing to a prior, teleological theory of nature need not fall afoul of Hume's critique. Contrary to appearances, the suggestion goes, such theories do not attempt to derive ethical claims from a value-free conception of nature but from one already informed by a teleological account of value. Aristotle's theory has been thought to exemplify this approach, for Aristotle claims independently of any ethical argument that the nature of an animal must be understood in terms of its *telos* and that the realization of this *telos* is beneficial to it.⁷⁹ If this strategy is sound, then claims about what benefits an organism and about the way of life that is best for it will follow from an understanding of its nature that accurately reflects the organism's end.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Undoubtedly, there are teleological elements in Butler as well, and many of his arguments are clearly based on Stoic precedents. Yet Butler's arguments are not supported by a broad, independent theory of teleological naturalism, as are those of Aristotle and the Stoics. On Butler's use of Stoicism, see T. Irwin, 'Butler', 274-300.

⁷⁸ Though such an account may not, by itself, support very fine-grained ethical conclusions. Or, what is more worrisome, it may support the *wrong* sort of ethical conclusions. The latter worry looms large when the norms of evolutionary biology in particular are taken to be the relevant considerations.

⁷⁹ E.g. *Meta.* 1013b25, *Phys.* 198b4-9.

⁸⁰ There is significant debate in the literature, which I have not been able to explore here, about whether ancient identifications of what is beneficial to a thing with its *telos* ought to be understood as a substantive attempt to ground ethical theses in non-normative claims, or whether Aristotle's theory is "normative all the way down", as Whiting puts it. See Whiting, 'Aristotle's Function Argument: A Defense', *Ancient Philosophy*, 8 (1988), 33-48. In addition to Whiting, commentators broadly sympathetic to the latter approach might be thought to include Martha Nussbaum and John McDowell. Cf. Martha C. Nussbaum, 'Aristotle on Human Nature and the Foundations of Ethics', in J. Altham, J. Edward, and R. Harrison (eds.), *World, Mind, and Ethics: Essays on the Ethical Philosophy of Bernard Williams* (Cambridge, 1995), 86-131; John McDowell, 'Two Sorts of Naturalism', in J. McDowell, *Mind, Value and Reality* (Cambridge MA, 1998), 167-97. Irwin's view, as I understand it, is more representative of the former approach. See, e.g., T. Irwin, 'The Metaphysical and Psychological Basis of Aristotle's Ethics' ['Basis'], in A. Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* (Los Angeles, 1980), 35-54. T. Irwin, 'Aristotle's Methods of Ethics' in D. O'Meara (ed.), *Studies in Aristotle* (Washington, 1981), 193-223.

I shall argue that Stoic ethical theory conforms to this general strategy. The Stoics share with Aristotle an assumption common to other Hellenistic schools and to the syncretistic ethics of Antiochus in particular: namely, that the human good consists in the perfection of essential human properties. Like Aristotle, the Stoics fill in their account of the human *telos* by offering a characterization of what is essential in human nature. What is distinctive in Stoic perfectionism, however, is the way in which the Stoic account of essential human nature is wholly restricted to those properties that regulate and explain human belief and action. Human perfection, in the Stoic view, depends entirely on the perfection of the soul's leading faculty, the *hêgemonikon*. This feature of Stoic perfectionism ultimately supports a monistic account of the human good that distinguishes it from other Hellenistic perfectionist theories.⁸¹ The human good, according to the Stoics, consists wholly in perfection of human nature *qua* rational.

This is not to say, however, that the Stoics' conception of cosmic nature is not central to Stoic ethics or that it does not have a foundational role to play. Though the justification for the claim that happiness depends on rational perfection rests, in the first instance, on the Stoic account of essential human properties, the Stoics regard the cosmos itself as the fullest expression of rationality. Humankind's place in this broader scheme is therefore relevant to discovering exactly how a rational creature ought to live. Though facts about cosmic nature do not supply the most basic justification for living a rationally ordered life, the Stoics find in the cosmic scheme

⁸¹ For statements of Antiochean perfectionism, see *Fin.* 5.24-25. Cf. *Fin.* 4.35-36. For Stoic versions of this premise, see DL 7.94: "Another particular definition of the good which they give is "the natural perfection of a rational being *qua* rational" (trans. Hicks). Cf. *Tusc.* 5.38-9 and esp. Seneca, *Ep.* 41.7-9: "Praise . . . that which is the peculiar property of the man. Do you ask what this is? It is soul, and reason brought to perfection in the soul. For man is a reasoning animal. Therefore, man's highest good is attained, if he has fulfilled the good for which nature designed him at birth" (trans. Gummere). On the basis of these and other passages, I disagree with White's contention that Stoicism cannot be described as a "self-realizationist" view. Cf. N. White, 'The Basis of Stoic Ethics', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 83 (1979), 143-178. Cf. also *infra*, Appendix.

substantive norms of rationality that determine what such a life consists in. In the Stoic view, rational human agents will conform to the cosmic order, *qua* rational, because there the requirements of rationality are most perfectly expressed.

I shall argue more explicitly for this interpretation in Chapter Three. Before defending it in greater detail, however, it is worth considering a recent debate concerning the form Stoic appeals to nature take. On the one hand, a substantial interpretive tradition has supposed that in speaking of conformity to nature, the Stoics have in mind, at least in part, the order of the cosmos itself.⁸² Yet this interpretation has recently been challenged by a number of commentators who tend to dismiss, or at least to minimize, the central place of cosmic nature in Stoic ethics. Julia Annas in particular has argued that appeals to cosmic nature are fundamentally incompatible not just with Stoic theory, but with ancient ethical eudaimonism in general. In Annas's view, since facts about cosmic nature are extrinsic to any plausible account of human well-being, Stoic ethical theory must depend on an account of specifically *human* nature.⁸³ Her argument for this conclusion depends on her assumption of a strong constraint on any eudaimonist account, namely, that in order to be of relevance to ethical theory, a given account of *eudaimonia* must be able to be endorsed from perspective of the agent whose welfare it purports to describe.

⁸² In this category, we might include the readings of Stoicism found in Adam Smith, Henry Sidgwick, Max Pohlenz and Gilbert Murray. More recently, A. Long, Gisela Striker, Michael Frede, Nicholas White and Tad Brennan have defended versions of this view.

⁸³ Annas has been followed in a number of studies by Christopher Gill. See esp. Gill 'The Stoic Theory of Ethical Development: In What Sense is Nature a Norm?' ['Development'], in J. Szaif and M. Lutz-Bachmann (eds.) *Was ist das für den Menschen Gute??* (Berlin, 2004), 101-125. Though Irwin acknowledges the Stoics' reliance on appeals to cosmic nature, he doubts that "the appeal to cosmic nature solves many problems about Stoic ethics". See Irwin, 'Conceptions', 208n4. Gregory Vlastos and Troels Engberg-Pedersen also appear sympathetic to this view. For a brief discussion of Vlastos's (unpublished) view of the matter, see A. Long, 'Stoic Eudaimonism' in *Stoic Studies* (Berkeley, 1996), 179-201 at 188. Engberg-Pedersen perhaps goes the furthest, since he appears to reserve little role whatsoever for any objectively constrained account of the human good in Stoicism. See T. Engberg-Pedersen, *The Stoic Theory of Oikeiōsis* [*Stoic Theory*] (Aarhus, 1990).

The implications of this constraint, however, are rather stronger than perhaps even Annas intends, for the assumption that rational requirements depend on an agent's motivational starting points poses difficulties not merely for an ethical appeal to cosmic nature but for any ethical appeal to objective foundations at all. If the requirements of practical reason are strongly constrained by what agents can themselves be brought to endorse, there is little antecedent reason to suppose either that human nature will prove of particular relevance to ethics or that practical reason, so conceived, will support stringent impartial requirements of the sort Annas attributes to Stoic theory. If Annas is correct about the form ancient eudaimonism must take, then irrespective of whether the Stoics appeal to cosmic or human nature these appeals can be of relevance to their ethical theory only by conforming to the psychological commitments of the agents to whom they purport to apply. In the remainder of the present chapter, therefore, I consider Annas's arguments for the claim that appeals to cosmic nature cannot, even in principle, be foundational to Stoic ethics. I then argue that, in relying on internalist assumptions to exclude this interpretation of Stoicism, Annas equally excludes the interpretation of Stoicism she favors.

2.2 Interpretations of Stoic naturalism

According to Christopher Gill, we may usefully distinguish between ethicist interpretations of Stoic ethics, such as his own, which places particular emphasis on the autonomy of ethical claims, and naturalist ones, such as Gisela Striker's, which holds that Stoic ethics rests on "extra-ethical considerations".⁸⁴ An extra-ethical consideration, as Gill appears to understand it, is one that cannot plausibly be thought to exert pressure on the motivations an untutored agent might bring to the study of

⁸⁴ C. Gill, 'Development', 107.

ethics.⁸⁵ An ethicist interpretation, on the other hand, holds that Stoic ethics rests on considerations that might fruitfully engage with an agent's pre-theoretic motivations. So conceived, ethicist interpretations of Stoic ethics would appear to include those of Annas and Gill and perhaps also that of Troels Engberg-Pedersen, who concludes that the Stoics construct "an argument proper for their view of the human *telos* that nowhere relies on any premises outside human seeing".⁸⁶

Gill's taxonomy is perhaps not the most illuminating one available, however, for two reasons. First, there is no reason why an ethical theory that restricts itself to an elaboration of the motivations present in untutored human nature should be described as ethicist--unless one has already accepted a controversial and broadly subjective characterization of ethics. To do so merely appears to beg the question against objective accounts. Nor is it clear why an ethicist interpretation, so understood, should not equally count as a naturalist view. The ethical theories of Hume and Hobbes, for instance, surely rest on an appeal to human nature in some sense.⁸⁷ Though they aim to derive an account of ethics from the structure of human motivation in particular, they are not clearly less naturalist for that. In deriving the content of ethics from features of human psychology, these theories might with equal fairness be described as naturalist.⁸⁸ We can therefore distinguish three basic ways in which appeals to nature have been thought to function in Stoic theory, each of which could in principle provide a naturalist foundation for their ethical theory, that is, an explanation of why human beings have reason to act in one way rather than another.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 107-12.

⁸⁶ T. Engberg-Pedersen, *Stoic Theory*, 43, qtd. in A. Long, 'Basis', 155.

⁸⁷ For example, here is how Korsgaard characterizes the "sentimentalism" of Hume in *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge, 1996): "The reflective endorsement method [which Korsgaard endorses] has its natural home in theories that reject realism and *ground morality in Human nature*" (50, emphasis mine).

⁸⁸ Or as Nagel puts it, "On Hume's view one begins with psychology, and ethics is an elaboration of it". See T. Nagel, *The Possibility of Altruism [Possibility]* (Oxford, 1970), 11.

(1) One very straightforward way of conceiving the Stoic view might hold that the notion of conformity to cosmic nature plays a basic role in explaining the rationality of action in Stoic theory. Such an approach remains compatible with the Stoic commitment to eudaimonism as long as facts about cosmic nature are not understood to explain the rationality of action directly, but only insofar as they constrain the content of *eudaimonia*. Though a number of commentators emphasize the centrality of cosmic nature, they tend to neglect this qualification, representing Stoic ethics as a kind of naturalized divine command theory according to which, roughly speaking, the ultimate reason one has to live virtuously is that the order or intent expressed in the design of cosmic nature requires it.⁸⁹ On this view, whatever the more particular requirements of virtue turn out to be, an agent would have no independent reason to satisfy them if she did not thereby conform to the plan articulated in the structure of the cosmos. Strands of this account, or something like it, seem to figure in the interpretations of Stoic ethics offered by Michael Frede, Gisela Striker and Nicholas White. These commentators sometimes appear to suggest that the rational Stoic agent ought to live virtuously, first and foremost, *because* this is what cosmic nature intends.

(2) Another sort of appeal to nature might hold that facts about the *kind* of thing one is provide a basic (though not necessarily the most basic) explanation of the practical reasons one has. Though such a theory restricts the relevant conception of nature to human nature in particular, it is so far consistent with a range of conclusions

⁸⁹ Something like this line of thought appears to be assumed by Frede when he writes that, according to the Stoics, “we come to realize that appropriate action, if done for the reason that it accords with nature—i.e. for the reason that it is what nature means us to do—constitutes what is good, and recognizing this, it henceforth is our overriding aim to act in this way”. See M. Frede, ‘On the Stoic Conception of the Good’ [‘Good’], in K. Ierodiakonou (ed.), *Topics in Stoic Philosophy* (Oxford, 1999), 71-94 at 81. Compare W. Alston, who characterizes divine command theory as the view that “divine commands are constitutive of the moral status of actions”. See W. Alston, ‘What Euthyphro Should Have Said’, in W. Craig (ed.), *Philosophy of Religion: A Reader and Guide* (New Brunswick, 2002), 283-89 at 284. Cf. R. Adams, ‘A Modified Divine Command Theory of Ethical Wrongness’, in G. Outka and J. Reader (eds.), *Religion and Morality* (Garden City, 1975), 318-47.

about the specific properties with which ethics is concerned. Compatibly with this view one might argue that a will to power is the essential or distinctive capacity of human nature, or the capacity to enjoy sadistic pleasure, or the capacity to act on reasons. Each of these views characterizes the relevant properties of human nature in different ways, yet all have in common an attempt to fill in an account of ethics or of the human good by adverting to the *kind* of thing human beings are. Such an approach fits fairly naturally within a eudaimonist framework, since one may argue that although *eudaimonia* is the ultimate end of rational action, the content of *eudaimonia* is to be determined, in the first instance, by the properties essential to or distinctive of human nature (or perhaps by the intersection of these sets).⁹⁰ An account of Stoicism along these lines seems to figure, broadly speaking, in the interpretation of Stoicism defended by Pohlenz and more recently, perhaps, by Terry Irwin. It is also the approach favored by Annas, though as I shall argue, some of her characterizations of ancient eudaimonism in fact rule it out.

(3) A third line of interpretation might suppose that the Stoics reject any appeal to human nature objectively conceived. Reasons for action, on this third account, are not to be explained by an independently fixed account of human nature but more narrowly by specific features of human psychology, for instance, by facts about what human beings desire or value. Two features of this third approach are worth noting. First, a psychological grounding of ethics that proceeds along these lines is typically understood to support only *hypothetical* requirements.⁹¹ Even if rational requirements can be shown to apply universally in virtue of universally shared motivations, on such

⁹⁰ For critical discussion of various ways of identifying the relevant set of properties see T. Hurka, *Perfectionism* (Oxford, 1993), Chapter 2.

⁹¹ See, e.g., P. Foot, 'Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives', *The Philosophical Review*, 81 (1972), 305-16. Cf. also G. Lawrence, 'The Rationality of Morality', in R. Hursthouse, G. Lawrence and W. Quinn (eds.), *Virtues and Reasons: Philippa Foot and Moral Theory* (Oxford, 1985), 89-148; J. McDowell, 'Might there be External Reasons?', in J. Altham, J. Edward, and R. Harrison (eds.), *World, Mind and Ethics, Essays on the Ethical Philosophy of Bernard Williams* (Cambridge, 1995), 78-85.

a view they will nonetheless be contingent in a strong sense: were the relevant features of human psychology to change, the requirements of rationality they support would change as well. Second, a psychological grounding of this sort ought to be distinguished from a view that supports the sort of objectivity associated with Kantian views. There is nothing in appeals to human motivational psychology that inherently supports the view that, on pain of inconsistency, agents must will the rational requirements that apply to them as universal law. On a broadly Humean or subjectivist theory, it will be a further, contingent psychological question whether rational agents are subject to the requirements of legislative universalism. This is worth pointing out, since a number of the commentators who interpret Stoic ethics along Humean lines also attribute this broadly Kantian feature of rationality to the Stoic theory.⁹² Yet Kantian objectivism about rationality is not ordinarily thought to follow from Humean subjectivism about it.⁹³

None of these views about the relation of nature to ethics need commit the Stoics to any specific ethical injunctions. Each of these interpretations holds merely that a particular conception of nature is foundational to ethics in the sense of explaining *why* an agent has reason to act one way rather than another. To be consistent with eudaimonism as I have characterized it, these accounts should not purport to offer the *most basic* explanation of why an agent reason to act (though they are sometimes presented this way in the literature), for an appeal to *eudaimonia* is where rational justification ought to stop, in the Stoic view. They ought rather to be understood as proximate explanations, or as the beginning of a substantive account of what *eudaimonia* consists in. On this view, the Stoic conception of what conformity to nature requires shapes the specific requirements of Stoic ethics. The reason an

⁹³ See, e.g., G. Cullity and B. Gaut, 'Introduction', in G. Cullity and B. Gaut (eds.), *Ethics and Practical Reason* (Oxford, 1997), 1-28.

agent has to conform to nature at all is to be explained, in turn, by the fact that she thereby achieves *eudaimonia*.

2.3 Annas on Stoic naturalism and cosmic foundations

In *The Morality of Happiness*, Julia Annas argues against an interpretation that proceeds along the lines of (1).⁹⁴ She holds, in particular, that Stoic ethical theory does not depend on Stoic cosmology for either its content or its normative justification. Though acknowledging that the Stoics' teleological conception of the cosmos somehow complements and confirms their ethical views, Annas maintains that Stoic physical and theological doctrines do not provide an independent method of

⁹⁴ Annas has since stated that she does not attribute an internalist conception of reasons to the Stoics in *The Morality of Happiness*. She revisits the role of cosmic nature in Stoic ethics in a recent article ['Ethics in Stoic Philosophy', *Phronesis*, 52 (2007), 58-87] in which she replies at length to some of Cooper's criticisms of her view. The article is confusing on several counts: (1) Annas there describes Cooper's characterization of her own view of the ethical as Cooper's view of the ethical and rejects it as such (76). (2) Annas faults Cooper for introducing talk of Williams's conception of reasons into the debate about Stoic eudaimonism (70n30), though in fact Annas plainly introduces it in the *Morality of Happiness* (170n46), and both those sympathetic to her apparent rejection of external reasons (e.g. Gill) and those critical of it (e.g. Cooper and Brittain) have so construed her analysis there. (3) Annas characterizes Cooper's account of the priority of cosmic nature in terms of motivational priority, when in fact Cooper is concerned with justificatory priority. This characterization is perhaps revealing about Annas's presuppositions about the nature of ethical justification, despite her concern to distance herself from Williams in this article. (4) Though Annas concedes that (a) the Stoics appeal to external reasons, she is nonetheless concerned to show that (b) there is no "sense in which physics is motivationally prior to ethics" (72). But once (a) is granted, it is unclear why (b) should be relevant, since according to (a) justificatory priority does not entail motivational priority. If (a) is conceded, then establishing (b) is not sufficient to rule out the presence of a justificatory appeal to cosmic nature in Stoicism. So while explicitly rejecting the reduction of justificatory reasons to motivational ones, Annas simultaneously rejects the justificatory priority of cosmic nature by arguing against its motivational priority. That is, her argument remains implicitly committed to a premise she explicitly rejects. In general, Annas's tendency to associate motivating reasons with justificatory reasons is undiminished in this article, despite her ostensible abandonment of Williams. Particularly confusing is Annas's assertion that "Modern debates about ethical foundations are too dissimilar to ancient concerns to be themselves usefully applied" (73n36). This claim, if true, would undermine much of Annas's project in the *Morality of Happiness*, in which she regularly applies modern debates to ancient views, as when she faults the Stoics for doing "a much less thorough job than Kant of examining the formal features of the reasoning which leads us to grasp the peculiar value of virtue" (170). Cf. C. Brittain, 'Rationality, Rules and Rights' ['Rationality'], *Apeiron*, 34 (2001), 247-67; Gill, 'Development', J. Cooper, 'Eudaimonism and the Appeal to Nature in *The Morality of Happiness*', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 55 (1995), 587-98; J. Cooper, 'Eudaimonism, Nature and "Moral Duty"', in S. Engstrom and J. Whiting (eds.), *Aristotle, Kant, and the Stoics* (Cambridge, 1996), 261-84; Cf. also B. Inwood, 'Review of Annas', *Ancient Philosophy*, 15 (1995), 647-56.

deriving claims about the best life for human beings; they merely complete an ethical outlook whose fundamentals are established on different grounds. Cosmic nature does not function as a first principle in ethics, in her view, but only enables the Stoics to place an independently established view of the human good “in a wider perspective”.⁹⁵ Before considering Annas’s arguments for this claim, it is perhaps worth clarifying her terminology in two respects. According to most contemporary taxonomies, ethical naturalism may be broadly characterized as the view that the claims of ethics purport to describe natural facts and that they in fact do so.⁹⁶ Judged by this criterion, any of the three appeals to nature outlined above might reasonably be described as naturalist.⁹⁷ Yet according to Annas, ancient ethical theories turn out “not to be naturalism, not, at least, as that is usually taken in modern ethics”.⁹⁸ Annas maintains that ancient theories are naturalistic only in two fairly limited ways, namely, insofar as they aim to respect the practical limits of human nature and insofar as they characterize a certain form of natural development as an ethical ideal.⁹⁹ Since references to nature figure explicitly and prominently in some of the Stoics’ most basic ethical formulations, this may seem a surprising result.¹⁰⁰

Annas’s judgment turns out to depend on an idiosyncratic understanding of ethical naturalism, however. Following the “classic account in Frankena (1973)”, she characterizes ethical naturalism as the thesis that moral terms can “be defined in or reduced to non-moral terms”.¹⁰¹ Accordingly, on her account, ancient theories will not

⁹⁵ Annas, *Morality*, 165.

⁹⁶ See, e.g., D. Brink, *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics* (Cambridge, 1989), 156-63; M. Smith, *The Moral Problem* (Oxford, 1994), 17-20.

⁹⁷ This means that expressivist theories (which might be thought to be an instance of the third kind of naturalist approach distinguished above), are excluded from the definition I have followed here.

⁹⁸ *Morality*, 135.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 215.

¹⁰⁰ As Annas herself notes (*ibid.*, 136n4)

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 135n1. Frankena’s book, just old enough to predate most causal theories of reference on which many contemporary naturalists rely, characterizes naturalism as the claim that ethical terms refer to natural properties as part of their *meaning*. See Frankena, *Ethics* (Englewood Cliffs, 1973), Chapter 6.

count as naturalist insofar as they fail to hold that ethical claims refer to natural properties as a matter of definition or conceptual analysis. As an account of ethical naturalism, this characterization is inadequate, in the first place, because it fails to exclude non-naturalist reductions of ethical terms (such as a divine command theorist might wish to give).¹⁰² But more importantly, Annas suggests that a naturalist ethical theory involves the reduction of ethical concepts to non-ethical ones.¹⁰³ This thesis assumes both that ethical naturalism entails a commitment to reduce ethical terms to non-ethical ones and that the relevant form of reduction is to be treated as matter of conceptual analysis. Yet neither assumption is entailed by contemporary accounts of naturalism. Many (if not most) ethical naturalists take reduction to involve a thesis about *property identities* or metaphysical analysis rather than about concepts, while others deny that ethical naturalism requires any such reduction at all. Accordingly, the fact that ancient theories do not offer or conceptual or definitional reductions of ethical properties to non-ethical ones cannot show either that they are not naturalist in a contemporary sense or in a sense contemporary with the publication of *The Morality of Happiness*.¹⁰⁴ To show that the Stoics are not committed to definitional naturalism does not show that they are not committed to any form of ethical naturalism.

Annas's use of 'foundationalism' invites similar clarification. Since she does not provide a specific statement of ethical foundationalism in the *Morality of Happiness*, it is difficult to know what sort of naturalistic foundations she means to

¹⁰² It fails to exclude divine command theory, for instance, which is not usually thought to be a naturalist ethical view.

¹⁰³ Thus she writes, "ancient theories are not reductive; in keeping with the way that they do not try to reduce ethical concepts to those of virtue, they do not try to reduce ethical concepts in general to those that are not ethical". See *Morality*, 135.

¹⁰⁴ As Smith notes in *The Moral Problem* (Oxford, 1994), 24: "We might say that naturalism is first and foremost a metaphysical doctrine rather than a definitional doctrine, and that though naturalists therefore have to be in the business of giving us property identities, they do not have to be in the business of giving us definitions."

reject in the case of Stoicism.¹⁰⁵ At different points her discussion appears to suppose that a fact or set of facts is foundational to ethics in case it (1) justifies conformity to the claims of ethics, (2) determines the specific content of ethics or (3) must be known in order to know the content of ethics. Since none of these claims entails any of the others, each needs to be accepted or rejected on its own.¹⁰⁶ Though Annas appears to reject the application of any of them to the Stoic account of cosmic nature, many of her criticisms are directed at a version of (3), perhaps because (1) and (2) are taken to entail (3). Yet (3) is independent of both (1) and (2). Euthyphro may well find the gods' commands to be an accurate index of pious actions while denying either that the gods' commands determine which actions are pious or that they justify our performance of them, or both. Conversely, the question whether ethical requirements may or must be known through facts about cosmic nature need not imply conclusions about what determines or justifies conformity to their content.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Annas rejects, for example, the notion that, "the life according to nature could ground or be prior to "the life according to virtue". See *Morality*, 135. On the other hand, she says that, "we can support ethical claims, and in particular we can support them by appeal to nature" (136). She suggests that the concept of nature functions in ancient ethics as a developmental and ethical ideal that serves as "the goal or end of human development" (137), but she also writes that ancient appeals to nature do not "depend on teleology" (139). She suggests that cosmic nature backs (164) and underwrites (166) Stoic ethical conclusions but also that it cannot explain the content of Stoic ethics nor "help in any way to produce its distinctive theses" (165).

¹⁰⁶ For (1), see, e.g., *Morality*, 135: "If the Stoics in appealing to nature were naturalists in the modern sense sketched above, their position would be impossible even to state coherently". Cf. also 162: "If cosmic nature is foundational, then it seems that the Stoic answer to the question, what my happiness consists in, must simply be conformity to cosmic nature". For (2), see, e.g., 165: "The perspective of cosmic nature does not add any ethical theses, nor does it change or modify those we already know". For (3), see, e.g., 159: "The view [suggested by some texts] is clearly foundational, since to be virtuous we first have to discover nature, and then follow it".

¹⁰⁷ That is, if we suppose (1) that facts about cosmic nature both determine the content of ethics and justify our conformity to it, this might show that we can know the content of ethics by knowing those facts, but it wouldn't show (2) that we can know the content of ethics *only* by knowing these facts. Since (2) is not implied by (1), rejecting it is not sufficient for rejecting (1). But (2) is what Annas rejects.

2.4 Textual considerations

Annas offers other considerations that directly challenge foundationalism in the sense of (1) and (2), however.¹⁰⁸ Though she acknowledges that both Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius regularly advert to claims about cosmic nature to support Stoic ethical doctrines, she holds that this emphasis represents a later development of Stoic doctrine and that the texts attributed to Chrysippus properly refer to human nature alone. She considers, in particular, the evidence of Diogenes Laertius, who reports that in the first book of his lost treatise on ends, Chrysippus maintained that in the human case, living virtuously is living in accordance with the “experience (*empeiria*) of the actual course of nature”. Chrysippus’ rationale for this claim, says Diogenes, is that “our individual natures are parts (*merê*) of the whole”.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, although Diogenes says very little about the arguments the Stoics advanced to defend this formulation of the end, he explicitly indicates that Chrysippus appealed to the premise that man is a part of the cosmos to defend his claim that humans are to live in harmony with both human and cosmic nature. The part-whole relation of man to the cosmos “is why (*dihoper*) the end may be defined as life in accordance with nature, or in other words, in accordance with our own human nature as well as that of the whole (*kata tèn tôn holôn*)”.¹¹⁰ According to Diogenes, then, Chrysippus somehow appealed to humankind’s relation to the cosmos in order to defend his account of the virtuous life as conformity to nature. The fact that this statement occurred near the beginning of a treatise in which Chrysippus presumably offered a detailed account of the human *telos*

¹⁰⁸ More precisely, Annas rejects the claim that (1) “the perspective of cosmic” nature has any bearing on the content of ethics and (2) the claim that it “adds any motivation”. This excludes (2) as I have formulated it both because Annas appears to associate claims about justification with claims about motivation and because she holds that “nothing can be added by the cosmic perspective except a deepened grasp of the significance of Stoic ethics as part of a wider world view”. See *Morality*, 166.

¹⁰⁹ DL 7.86.

¹¹⁰ DL 7.87-88. Hicks regularly translates *to holon* as ‘the cosmos’. I have changed this to ‘the whole’ but have otherwise adopted his translation.

suggests that an understanding of cosmic nature entered importantly into his characterization of the human good.

Although the evidence from Diogenes Laertius suggests a clear precedent for this emphasis in the work of Chrysippus, and although several of Cicero's statements also confirm this understanding, Annas does not interpret the textual evidence in this way. In the passage noted above, Diogenes goes on to say that, "by the nature with which our life ought to be in accord, Chrysippus understands both universal nature and more particularly the nature of man (*tên te koinên kai idiôs tên anthrôpinên*)".¹¹¹ Annas construes this claim in terms of a contrast not between human nature and that of the whole cosmos, but between the nature of a particular individual and human nature in general. In explaining what Chrysippus means by 'common' (*koinên*), she writes,

[F]or the Stoics the rational point of view is one from which we come to appreciate what is 'common' to all, namely, our status as rational beings. The fully virtuous Stoic will ignore, as irrelevant, differences between people that are not sanctioned by the rational point of view; and will thus come to have no more concern for his own interests, from the moral point of view, than for any other rational being.¹¹²

It is doubtful that the Greek could support Annas's proposal to understand '*phusin koinên*' as a reference to a common rational faculty, particularly one responsive to the rather stringent conception of impartiality she goes on to suggest. However one translates '*phusin koinên*', the suffix of the contrast term '*anthrôpinên*' must be taken to indicate human nature in the abstract and not merely the nature of a particular individual. Hence '*phusin koinên*' must apply to something even more general than human nature. Annas perhaps relies on '*idiôs*' to give the sense of a particular

¹¹¹ DL 7.89, Hicks's translation.

¹¹² Annas, *Morality*, 173.

individual, but this reading seems unjustified in view of the clear sense of ‘*anthrôpinên*’; “specifically human nature” would seem more accurate.

The most plausible candidate for the referent of *koinên* is indeed universal or cosmic nature, for in the immediate context Diogenes is explaining the Stoic conception of the human good in terms of conformity to the will of Zeus--the *orthos logos* pervading all things (*dia pantôn erchomenos*).¹¹³ Not only is the same expression used regularly by Marcus and Epictetus to refer to the cosmos as a whole, a passage quoted by Plutarch shows clearly that Chrysippus himself (and more than once) used ‘*koinê phusis*’ to describe the cosmic order as opposed merely to the common nature of mankind:

For there is no other or more suitable way of approaching the theory of good and evil or the virtues and happiness <than> from the universal nature (*apo tês koinês phuseôs*) and from the dispensation of the universe (*apo tês tou kosmou dioikêseôs*).¹¹⁴

Here the parallelism of ‘common nature’ and ‘cosmos’ makes it clear that ‘*koinê phusis*’ refers to more than merely human nature, particularly since this passage occurs in the context of Plutarch’s own discussion of the ethical application Chrysippus made of physical doctrines. The texts preserved by Diogenes confirm that Chrysippus himself regarded humankind’s relation to the cosmos as fundamental to the Stoic understanding of the good life.

A second textual argument advanced by Annas holds both that Cicero’s account of Chrysippean ethics is more reliable than that of Diogenes and that Cicero does not treat claims about cosmic nature as a necessary basis for Stoic ethical

¹¹³ DL 7.88.

¹¹⁴ *Stoic. repugn.* 1035c (trans. Cherniss). Plutarch preserves at least two fragments in which Chrysippus uses *koinê phusis* to refer to the cosmos.

doctrines.¹¹⁵ Yet Annas does not discuss carefully a number of passages that appear to contradict these claims. For example, at *De finibus* 3.73, Cicero writes that, “he who is to live in accordance with nature must set out from the system and government of the entire world”.¹¹⁶ He goes on to remark that it is impossible “to judge truly of things good and evil, save by a knowledge of the whole plan of nature (*omni cognita ratione naturae*)”.¹¹⁷ Though Annas alludes briefly to this passage, she does not quote it in full or discuss it in any detail.¹¹⁸ Nor does she discuss an important passage of *De finibus* in which Cicero explicitly bases an ethical conclusion on claims about cosmic nature:

Again, they [the Stoics] hold that the universe is governed by divine will; it is a city or state of which both men and gods are members, and each one of us is a part of this universe (*et unumquemque nostrum eius mundi esse partem*), from which it is a natural consequence (*ex quo illud natura consequi*) that we should prefer the common advantage to our own.¹¹⁹

Here Cicero’s appeal to the part-whole relation humankind bears to the cosmos closely recalls the terms in which, according to Diogenes, Chrysippus justified his formulation of the human *telos*. The same imagery of part and whole appears yet again in a similar ethical argument at *De officiis* 3.22, where Cicero compares the individual’s place in society to that of a single bodily member in relation to the human body as a whole. These passages, together with many others in Epictetus, Seneca, and Marcus, support the interpretation of Diogenes’ text Annas dismisses.¹²⁰ Annas’s claim that cosmic

¹¹⁵ See esp. J. Annas, ‘Reply to Cooper’, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 55 (1995), 599-610 at 604-606. Given Cicero’s evident ignorance of the provenance and content of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, which he also purports to expound, it is perhaps surprising that Annas finds him such an authoritative guide to Chrysippus.

¹¹⁶ *Qui convenienter naturae victurus sit ei proficiscendum est ab omni mundo atque ab eius procuratione*. I have altered Rackham’s translation slightly.

¹¹⁷ *Fin.* 3.73.

¹¹⁸ In fact she supplies a somewhat misleading paraphrase. See Annas, *Morality*, 165.

¹¹⁹ *Fin.* 3.64, Rackham’s translation.

¹²⁰ It is also worth noting that as Schofield observes, the account of universal justice and law in *De legibus* begins with a Stoic premise about the rationality of cosmic nature. See *Leg.* 1.7.

nature “has no internal role in Cicero’s presentation of Stoic ethics” largely ignores this important evidence.¹²¹

Finally, Annas cites an illuminating article by Jacques Brunschwig, who analyses a number of passages in which Plutarch faults Chrysippus for not adhering in his treatises to the apparently canonical order in which Stoic divisions of philosophy were taught: logic, ethics, physics, theology (a part of physics). Plutarch offers three extracts from Chrysippus’ work as evidence for this departure, including a statement (noted above) that “there is no other or more suitable way of approaching the theory of good and evil or the virtues or happiness <than> from the universal nature (*tês koinês phuseôs*) and from the dispensation of the universe”.¹²² Brunschwig observes that the texts cited by Plutarch in fact come not from Chrysippus’ ethical works but from his theological and physical treatises. He suggests that, “Chrysippus’ foundationalist claims were uttered only at the final stage of his students’ curriculum, not at any previous stage of it”.¹²³ On the basis of Brunschwig’s argument, Annas concludes that, “cosmic nature has a role not as a part of ethical theory, but as a part of a study of ethical theory and its place in the wider scheme of Stoic philosophy”.¹²⁴

This conclusion is too quick, however, for Brunschwig does not argue that cosmic nature was no part of ethical theory, but that Chrysippus favored both dialectical arguments and demonstrations from nature. Moreover, Brunschwig’s claim is explicitly about pedagogical method rather than logical priority.¹²⁵ Yet even as regards pedagogy, the canonical order in which the various parts of Stoic philosophy

¹²¹ Annas, *Morality*, 606.

¹²² *Stoic. repugn.* 1035c, trans. Cherniss.

¹²³ Brunschwig, ‘Book Title’, 94.

¹²⁴ Annas, *Morality*, 164.

¹²⁵ Indeed, Brunschwig writes: “[O]nly at the end of the curriculum were the students told that the ultimate foundations of what they had been taught before were to be sought in the physical and theological truths they were introduced to” Brunschwig concludes that the Stoics relied both on apodeictic arguments from theological and physical premises and dialectical arguments from ethical preconceptions. See ‘Book Title’, 94-95.

were presented is far from clear. As Brunschwig also notes, contrary to the progression reported by Sextus, Diogenes Laertius reports that Zeno and Chrysippus preferred to “start their course with logic, go on to physics, and finish with ethics”.¹²⁶ Though he claims that Chrysippus defended the use of the dialectical method in ethics, Brunschwig also points out that the catalogue of ethical works attributed to Chrysippus is unfortunately incomplete. What does remain of the final section of the ethical catalogue (which deals with things good and evil, precisely the section said to require cosmic theory) includes two books of *proofs* (*apodeixeis*) for which physical doctrines may well have supplied premises. These considerations do not appear in Annas’s argument, yet they are relevant to a fair assessment of her conclusions.

There is therefore little textual reason to suppose that Chrysippus himself did not emphasize the importance of cosmic nature or that, as Annas suggests, the later works of Epictetus and Marcus depart substantially from Chrysippean views. Both of these authors give central place to the claim that that content of the human *telos* ought to be understood in terms of the relation between human beings and the cosmos as a whole. Here are two representative passages:¹²⁷

(1) Now if you regard yourself as a thing detached, it is natural for you to live to old age, to be rich, to enjoy health. But if you regard (*skopeis*) yourself as a man and as part of some whole (*kai meros holou tinos*), on account of that whole it is fitting (*kathêkei*) for you now to be sick, and now to make a voyage and run risks, and now to be in want, and on occasion to die before your time. Why, then, are you vexed? Do you not know that as the foot, if detached, will no longer be a foot, so you too, if detached, will no longer be a man? For what is a man? A part of a state; first of that state which is made up of gods and men, and then of that which is said to be very close to the other, the state that is a small copy of the universal state.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Sextus, *M* 7.22-3; DL 7.40.

¹²⁷ Cf. Aristotle, *Pol.* 1253a19 ff., *Met.* 1036b28 ff.

¹²⁸ Epictetus, *Diss.* 2.5.25-26, trans. Oldfather.

(2) Welcome everything which happens, even if it seems harsh, because it contributes to the health of the universe and the well-faring and well-being of Zeus. For he would not have brought this on man unless it had been advantageous to the whole.¹²⁹

Both of these texts assign a role to cosmic nature that appears to be perfectly consistent with the formulations attributed to Chrysippus. As I argue more fully in later chapters, the appeals to cosmic nature evident in these passages reflect the Stoic conviction that the cosmos itself is paradigmatically rational; its arrangement determines the norms to which a fully rational agent will conform.

2.5 Methodological concerns

More central to Annas's interpretation than textual considerations, however, is an independent methodological argument intended to undermine the claim that facts about cosmic nature could be of relevance to ethics. This argument depends, in particular, on accepting a subjective constraint on any plausible account of well-being, one that figures prominently in various contemporary theories. Together with a tacitly assumed principle of charity, Annas relies on this assumption to show that Stoic ethics could not, even in principal, rest on cosmic foundations. This argument is worth considering, for were it successful, it would indeed show that facts about cosmic nature do not justify the particular claims of Stoic ethics. Yet it would evidently show more than this as well. In fact what Annas appears to reject, though it is not clear that she intends to do so, is any justificatory account that fails to give sufficient weight to the agent's own evaluative attitudes:

Ethical theory begins from reflection on the agent's final good and how this is to be made determinate in a way which will enable the agent to make sense of her life and correctly order her priorities. The appeal to cosmic nature, however, does the opposite of what is required; it pulls the agent away from

¹²⁹ *Med.* 5.8 (trans. Long), qtd. in A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics* (Berkeley, 1986), 180.

the kind of attachment to her own concerns which is needed for useful reflection on her final end to be possible. Suppose I did come to have a definite conception of cosmic nature and its demands on me; this would still not be relevant to any of the concerns I need ethical theory for, until endorsed by reflection from the relevant point of view. But that point of view is the agent's point of view on his life as a whole and how best to order his priorities. The cosmic point of view, then, is useless for ethics unless endorsed as part of a theory that is eudaimonist in form.¹³⁰

Annas here claims (1) that ethical theory begins with an agent's concern to achieve the best overall life by bringing order to her priorities and (2) that the demands of cosmic nature are external to this concern.¹³¹

It is worth noticing that Annas's first premise (1) is ambiguous. It might be taken as a pedagogical point about the way in which the student of ethics will sensibly proceed. Understood this way, it appears merely to claim that the study of ethics naturally begins with reflection about the current state of one's priorities and proceeds from that point to a more determinate conception of the best form of life. Some of Annas's remarks elsewhere seem to support this understanding, for instance, her claim that thoughts about one's life as a whole constitute the "starting point for ethical reflection".¹³² But her statement might also be read as a point not about pedagogy but about the nature of the premises on which an ethical argument may legitimately rely. Understood in this way, the claim that eudaimonism begins with a concern to order one's priorities supplies a limiting condition on a eudaimonist ethical theory. Considerations not appropriately connected to one's antecedent aims will not be relevant to ethics since they will not provide the appropriate subject matter for the premises of an ethical argument.

¹³⁰ Ibid., pgs. 161-172.

¹³¹ Cicero's appeal to cosmic nature at *Fin.* 3.73 seems just as explicit as the texts of Plutarch and DL. Cf. also *Tusc.* 367, 5.68. Annas's claim that "cosmic nature has no internal role in Cicero's presentation of Stoic ethics" (*Morality* 164) seems merely to ignore this important evidence.

¹³² Ibid., 33.

This latter, stronger reading is required if (1) is to support Annas's conclusion, for the mere observation that ethical progress begins with reflection on one's life as a whole or with a desire to bring order to one's antecedent interests is compatible with the claim that further rational reflection may lead one to revise these motives substantially, and that considerations external to the motivations one begins with may play a role in this process. Annas does not provide an argument for the claim that the cosmic point of view is useless unless endorsed from the perspective of the agent. If she intends this constraint as a limiting condition on an ethical theory, however, it requires argument as a substantive and controversial assumption. Moreover, since it is an assumption that is frequently and explicitly rejected in Kantian accounts, it is puzzling to find that Annas explicates it by way of a comparison with Kantian theory.¹³³ Annas's reliance on (1) seems rather to result from the implicit assumption that plausible accounts of self-interest must be subjective accounts, that is, that any plausible account of self-interest is one that the agent, upon reflection, will endorse.¹³⁴ Yet this remains quite a controversial view in ethics.¹³⁵

To make this point more explicit, we might note that subjective accounts of well-being are sometimes distinguished by their acceptance of an endorsement constraint very much along the lines suggested by Annas. Wayne Sumner

¹³³ Annas associates it with Kantian theories, though such theories are often explicit in their rejection of the claim that motivation is prior to justification.

¹³⁴ Annas elsewhere cautions against applying un-argued Humean assumptions about the relation of motivation and reason to ancient views: "We must be aware of assumptions deriving from Hume that tend to oppose desire to reason, and to take it for granted that desire is just a kind of wanting which we happen to feel whether there is good reason for it or not, whereas reasons are capable of generating a different kind of motivation". See *Morality*, 35. Annas also asserts that there are "priorities which are not up to [the agent] to settle" (ibid., 140). If one's motivations are subject to rational revision as these quotations suggest, and if this process is not merely a matter of achieving a greater internal consistency among pre-existent aims, there is no clear rationale for excluding considerations the agent herself does not endorse. These quotations tend to make the endorsement condition expressed in (1) appear *ad hoc*.

¹³⁵ Cf. R. Arneson, whom I discuss below, in defense of objective list views: 'Desire Formation and the Human Good', in S. Olsaretti (ed.), *Preferences and Well-Being* (Cambridge, 2007), 9-32; R. Arneson, 'Human Flourishing and Desire Satisfaction', *Social Philosophy and Policy* 16, (1999), 113-42. Cf. also T. Hurka, *Perfectionism* (Oxford, 1993), Chapters 1-4.

distinguishes subjective accounts of well-being as those that “make welfare depend *at least in part* on some mental state.”¹³⁶ Richard Arneson characterizes subjective views as those denying “that the correctness of a claim about a person’s good is determined independently of that person’s volition, attitudes, and opinions”.¹³⁷ Arneson, who himself defends an objective account, further articulates two constraints, either of which is sufficient to distinguish a subjective account, in his view. According to a particularly *strong* subjective constraint, “nothing can make a basic, non-instrumental contribution to the goodness of a person’s life unless it is endorsed by that very person”.¹³⁸ According to a *weaker* version, “nothing can intrinsically enhance the quality of a person’s life unless that person has some positive, affirmative attitude toward that element of her life”.¹³⁹ Both types of constraint remain controversial, as is evident from Arneson’s criticism and rejection of both.

Understood in a way that rules out the possible relevance of cosmic nature, then, it appears that the constraint to which Annas appeals is sufficiently strong to commit her to a subjectivist characterization of eudaimonist views.¹⁴⁰ Yet besides being unmotivated, this characterization appears to conflict with other fundamental elements in her interpretation of Stoicism. Annas represents the Stoic position as expressing a distinctively moral point of view, and on her account this requires a demanding regard for the well-being of others. Thus she writes that, according to the Stoics, “realizing the value of virtue is to realize that one has a reason to act which is

¹³⁶ L. Sumner, *Welfare, Happiness and Ethics* (Oxford, 1996), 82, qtd. in R. Arneson ‘Flourishing’, 114-15. Cf. also C. Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge, 1996), 49-89.

¹³⁷ R. Arneson, ‘Flourishing’, 115.

¹³⁸ R. Arneson (‘Flourishing’, 135) attributes this kind of “endorsement constraint” to Dworkin. See R. Dworkin, ‘Foundations of Liberal Equality’, in G. Peterson (ed.), *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values* (Salt Lake City, 1990), 1-119 at 80-83.

¹³⁹ R. Arneson, ‘Flourishing’, 139.

¹⁴⁰ A tendency to conceive of well-being subjectively is evident in much of Annas’s characterization of ancient eudaimonist theories, for she frequently describes the role of such theories as one of ordering and prioritizing the motivational commitments one brings to the study of ethics. It is worth noting, however, that Annas elsewhere defends an objective account of *eudaimonia*. See J. Annas, ‘Happiness as Achievement’ *Daedalus*, 138 (2004), 44-51.

different in kind from a reason that merely promotes one's own desires and projects".¹⁴¹ She supposes that on the Stoic account, "We come to see that rational consensus makes a claim on us which has nothing to do with, and indeed can override, our own desires and wants, and also override reasons that have reference only to the satisfactions of those desires and wants".¹⁴²

Annas's account of eudaimonism in *The Morality of Happiness* pulls in a direction opposite these claims. Specifically, there is a basic tension between her claim (1) that Greek eudaimonism is characterized by the desire to give shape to an agent's priorities and her claim (2) that Stoic ethics supports a conception of impartiality that overrides reasons grounded in an agent's "desires and projects". To the degree that Stoic ethics requires impartiality, it is reasonable to expect that it may depart significantly from an agent's initial priorities, aims, desires or projects. In suggesting that appeals to *eudaimonia* rule out putatively unsatisfactory constraints such as the requirement to fit one's life into the rational order of the cosmos, Annas relies on the sort of endorsement constraint implicit in subjective theories of the good. In suggesting that Stoic theory supports a demanding form impartiality, however, she appears to neglect this constraint altogether. Since Annas does not show that the strong form of impartiality she attributes to the Stoics will not "[pull] the agent away from the kind of attachment to her own concerns which is needed for useful reflection on her final end", it is unclear why this criterion should exclude objectivity only in the form of appeals to cosmic nature.

Though Annas's attempt to explain away the role of cosmic nature is unconvincing, her analysis raises useful questions about the way in which the Stoic account of nature informs their conception of the human good. Were the Stoics

¹⁴¹ *Morality*, 263.

¹⁴² *Morality*, 170.

committed to the subjective form of eudaimonism Annas's interpretation implies, this commitment could in principle conflict with appeals to an objective account of human nature no less than an objective account of the cosmic order. That is to say, it would rule out the second type of interpretation I have distinguished and not merely the first. It is therefore worth considering, independently of Annas's argument, whether Stoic theory is committed to such a subjective account.

2.6 Are the Stoics Humeans?

Since the assumptions present in Annas's analysis have influenced other contemporary interpretations of Stoicism, I want briefly to argue that Stoic theory rejects them. Though Annas ostensibly favors an account of Stoic ethics that rests on an appeal to human nature, her characterization of ancient eudaimonism sometimes appears to commit her to a broadly Humean account of practical reason. On such a theory, some reference to an agent's motivations will always figure either in the analysis of any practical reason she has or, minimally, as a background condition that explains what considerations may count as practical reasons for her. Importantly, both conditions imply more than a merely material connection between motivation and rationality. We may suppose both (1) that all reasons are relative to a conception of happiness and (2) that all rational beings desire happiness. But we have not yet introduced a subjective or Humean element into our account unless we also hold that (2) partly explains (1).¹⁴³ This point is especially relevant in evaluating the Stoic position, since in the case of the ideally rational Stoic sage we may plausibly assume that some motivation to act will infallibly attend her recognition of whatever reasons

¹⁴³ There are two broad alternatives to such a position. We can deny that (2) helps to explain (1). For instance, we might hold that every human being desires her own good but can nevertheless be deceived about what it consists in. Or we can go further, for we might even suppose that (1) figures in the explanation of (2), that is, that a universal desire for happiness is present in rational creatures because that is what is rational for them to desire. The latter brings us closer, I think, to the Stoic position.

apply to her.¹⁴⁴ The relevant question is whether Stoic theory holds that these considerations count as reasons, at least in part, *because* the sage is motivated to act in a particular way.

Consideration of Stoic moral psychology, however, shows that the Stoics do not explain the connection between rationality and motivation as this account requires.¹⁴⁵ In particular, the Stoic theory makes every human action consequent on assent to a hormetic impression whose content may be regarded as an evaluative proposition (*lekton*) about the world. It is a condition of perfected rationality, on this account, that an agent assent only to true evaluative impressions of this sort. There is therefore a simple argument to be made for the claim that the Stoics are committed to conceiving of reasons in the externalist way. Whether an agent is practically rational, according to the Stoics, depends on whether she assents to all and only those hormetic impressions that are reliably true. Yet the truth or falsity of hormetic impressions depends, in turn, on facts independent of an agent's psychology.¹⁴⁶ Stoic moral psychology therefore makes the rationality of motivating states depend on their representational fit with the world, and this direction of explanation is opposite to that which the Humean theory requires.¹⁴⁷

It is worth noting, too, that besides being broadly at odds with the central claim of internalist theories, Stoic theory removes a basic motivation for Hume's particular version of internalism. For according to Hume, one reason why the desires that explain human action are not subject to rational evaluation, even in principle, is that

¹⁴⁴ Or as Nagel puts it, "There is to be sure a trivial sense in which necessity may be said to attach to the requirements of practical reason: namely, that a being who is perfectly rational will necessarily adhere to them". See T. Nagel, *Possibility*, 20.

¹⁴⁵ Whether assents are true or false derivatively, in virtue of their content, or whether they are themselves truth-evaluative is a matter for debate, but irrelevant to the question of externalism.

¹⁴⁶ At least in some cases. I do not mean to suggest that on the Stoic theory facts about motivation can never be a source of non-ultimate reasons.

¹⁴⁷ For a recent defense of a cognitive account of motivation, see S. Tenenbaum, 'Direction of Fit and Motivational Cognitivism', in R. Shafer-Landau (ed.) *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*, (Oxford, 2006), 235-64.

they are not truth-evaluable. On Hume's account the scope of rational evaluation is restricted to the character of belief alone precisely because beliefs, but not desires, can be true or false. Since motivation requires the presence of desire, which Hume characterizes as an "original existence . . . which contains not any representative quality", rational norms as he conceives them can apply only to belief and cognition.¹⁴⁸ The Stoics, by rather sharp contrast, hold that motivation is the province of a single cognitive faculty. Not only do they argue that motivating states purport to represent the world in a given way, they argue that it is in principle possible for an agent to assent to only those impressions that represent the world truly. The Stoics can therefore agree with Hume that rational norms apply only to cognitive states. But unlike Hume, who holds that only non-cognitive psychological states can motivate an agent, the Stoics hold that only cognitive ones can motivate. Since the Stoic theory effectively treat practical rationality as a form of epistemic rationality, the Stoics are committed to the view that human action, like human cognition, can be evaluated objectively. In general, externally conceived norms of rationality will plausibly apply to any account according to which motivating states are truth-evaluable in this way.¹⁴⁹ The Stoic theory would seem to be a paradigmatic instance of such an account.

There is little antecedent reason, then, to suppose that Stoic appeals to nature are strongly constrained by psychological facts in the way Annas's account supposes. The Stoic theory rather explains the rationality of motivating states in terms of their fit with the world, and this direction of explanation is broadly at odds with the third type of appeal to nature distinguished above. This leaves the first two possibilities I have distinguished as possible interpretations of the Stoic theory: (1) that the Stoics appeal

¹⁴⁸ See Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 2.3.3.5.

¹⁴⁹ I say "rationality of belief" to leave open the possibility that one could act rationally on a false albeit justified belief. In fact the Stoic condition is a much stronger one, since on the Stoic view no false belief can be rationally held, and hence action motivated by false belief cannot be rational.

directly to facts about the order of the cosmos to explain the character of ethical obligation or (2) that although the Stoics regard the order of the cosmos as relevant to the content of ethics, they appeal, in the first instance, to facts about human nature. Chapter Three, which considers the evidence for the Stoic theory of *oikeiôsis*, argues for the latter account.

CHAPTER 3

OIKEIÔSIS

3.1 Introduction

I have so far argued that the Stoics take reasons for action to be relative to an agent's *eudaimonia* and that the Stoic account of practical reason rejects the assumption, implicit in Annas's interpretation, that an agent's beliefs or motivations strongly constrain the content of an ethical theory. In the present chapter and the chapter to follow I hope to situate some of the details of Stoic ethical argument within this framework. I shall argue that the Stoics defend a form of perfectionism comprising two central claims: (1) that the human good consists in the perfected exercise of human rationality and (2) that the norms of rationality are to be understood by reference to the order expressed in the cosmos as a whole. This chapter aims to show how the first claim is developed in the Stoic theory of *oikeiôsis*.

Surviving reports of the Stoic theory follow a pattern in which two elements are especially prominent: They begin with an attempt to explain the apparently informed and purposeful behavior non-rational animals display towards a range of elements in their environment, and they conclude with the general thesis that the human good consists in a life regulated by reason or, as the Stoics sometimes describe it, in a life lived according to nature. Commentators have found it difficult to understand the relationship between these two claims. In particular, they have wondered how the Stoics set about drawing normative conclusions about the human good from claims about animal psychology. On the face of it, an appeal to animal behavior does not appear to offer a compelling strategy for establishing fundamental

ethical conclusions. Moreover, since the available evidence for the Stoic theory is scanty at best, there is little to show how the Stoic argument is supposed to proceed.¹⁵⁰

Despite these difficulties, I want to suggest that there is room for further attention to the doctrine's purported ethical import. I shall argue, in particular, that although the *oikeiōsis* account does not comprise a free-standing argument for the human good, it does provide such an argument when conjoined to an independent assumption the Stoics share with other Hellenistic schools, roughly, that the human *telos* is realized through the perfection of the properties essential to human nature. The Stoic theory depends, in part, on construing this assumption so that an animal's essential nature is identified wholly with its *hêgemonikon*, the perceptive faculty that explains and coordinates its behavior. If this suggestion is correct, then the Stoic theory of *oikeiōsis* is intended to provide both a characterization of the psychic faculty that explains human action and a description of the perfection of this faculty in the ideal case. It aims to establish the first point by arguing inductively from an account of animal self-perception in general. It then argues that the human good consists in the development of those specific features of human nature that figure in this account. So understood, the theory of *oikeiōsis* occupies a place in Stoic ethics broadly

¹⁵⁰ For a comparison of the Stoic theory to modern accounts of "proprioception", see A. Long, 'Self-perception', 250-63. Cf. also A. Long, 'Representation and the Self in Stoicism' ['Representation'], *ibid.*, 264-85. For analysis of its argumentative structure and place in Stoic ethics, see M. Frede, 'Good', 71-94; G. Striker, 'The Role of *oikeiōsis* in Stoic Ethics', in G. Striker, *Essays on Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics*, (Cambridge, 1996), 281-97; G. Striker, 'Following Nature', *ibid.*, 221-81. For discussion of the doctrine's possible relation to Xenophon, see M. Erler, 'Stoic *oikeiōsis* and Xenophon's Socrates', in T. Scaltsas and A. Mason (eds.), *The Philosophy of Zeno* (Larnaca, 2002), 239-58. For a recent treatment of *oikeiōsis* in its Roman context, see G. Reydams-Schils, 'Human Bonding and *oikeiōsis* in Roman Stoicism', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* (2002), 221-51. For discussion of the doctrine's legacy to Roman political thought, see M. Schofield, 'Epicurean and Stoic Political Thought' in C. Rowe and M. Schofield (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought* (New York and Cambridge, 2000), 435-56, esp. 449-52. Cf. also M. Schofield, 'Two Stoic approaches to Justice' ['Justice'], in A. Laks and M. Schofield (eds.), *Justice and Generosity* (Cambridge, 1995), 191-212. For a particularly interesting account of the doctrine's political import, which makes a case for its influence on Lucan's heavily politicized *Bellum civile*, see D. George, 'Lucan's Caesar and Stoic *oikeiōsis* Theory: The Stoic Fool', *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 118 (1988), 331-41.

analogous to the psychological account of Aristotle's *De anima*: it supplies an independent analysis of those aspects of human nature to which the Stoics appeal to explain and justify the broad requirements of ethics.¹⁵¹ In what follows, I first offer a brief survey of the available evidence for the theory of *oikeiōsis*. I then raise some difficulties for two interpretations of this evidence prominent in the literature. In the final section, I offer a revised account of the way in which the *oikeiōsis* theory figures in a valid argument for the Stoic conception of the human good.

3.2 Evidence for the Stoic doctrine

The state of the available evidence for the Stoic doctrine is complicated, to say the least. The Stoics did not coin the verbal noun '*oikeiōsis*', and there is no direct textual evidence that Chrysippus himself used it, though it is likely that he did. The term first appears in a fragment of Theophrastus and derives from a family of words occasionally put to philosophical use by Plato and Aristotle.¹⁵² The verb to which '*oikeiōsis*' is directly related is '*oikeioun*', and this is in turn akin to the Greek noun '*oikos*', denoting one's house, household or estate. A thing or person is said to be *oikeion* when it belongs to one either by kinship, as in the case of family, or by ownership, as in the case of property. As used by the Stoics, '*oikeiōsis*' refers to a creature's recognition that an object, or perhaps a state of affairs, somehow comports

¹⁵¹ On one line of interpretation, that is. This strategy is not uncontroversial as a reading of Aristotle. Cf. T. Irwin, 'Basis', 35-54; M. Nussbaum, 'Aristotle on Human Nature and the Foundations of Ethics', in J. Altham and R. Harrison (eds.), *World, Mind and Ethics: Essays on the Ethical Philosophy of Bernard Williams* (Cambridge, 1985), 86-131; T. Roche, 'On the Alleged Metaphysical Foundation of Aristotle's Ethics', *Ancient Philosophy* 8, (1988), 49-62. Cf. also *supra*, Chapter 2n80.

¹⁵² Fragment 190 in F. Wimmer, *Theophrasti Eresii opera quae supersunt omnia* (Leipzig, 1862). The most comprehensive recent surveys of the term '*oikeiōsis*' and its cognates are S. Pembroke, '*Oikeiōsis*' in A. Long (ed.), *Problems in Stoicism* (London: Athlone Press, 1971), 114-49 at 114-16 and 132-41; G. Kerford, 'The Search for Personal Identity in Stoic Thought' ['Search'], *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 55 (1972), 177-96. For use of related terminology in Plato and Aristotle, see esp. Pembroke, 132-38 and Kerford, 183-84. Tad Brennan discusses the Stoic theory's Platonic antecedents in *The Stoic Life* ['Life'], (Oxford, 2005), 155-63.

with or is *appropriate* to the creature's disposition.¹⁵³ An object is *oikeion* just in case it is correctly recognized as an appropriate object of care and concern for the animal.¹⁵⁴

The terminology of *oikeiōsis* appears in various fragments in connection with a distinctively Stoic account of human development. Surviving summaries of this account differ importantly in emphasis, and it is possible to produce different pictures of the Stoic doctrine depending on which of these are given the most weight. Two of the fullest presentations, which have also received the most scholarly attention, are those of Diogenes Laertius and Cicero. Diogenes' account, the shorter of the two, is distinctive for its presentation of material that appears to be taken from a lost Chrysippian treatise.¹⁵⁵ Cicero's version, more detailed in some respects, is also more difficult to attribute.¹⁵⁶ Cicero does not mention any old Stoic by name, and his summaries of the theory appear to follow later versions that are perhaps based (in the *De finibus*) on Diogenes of Babylon and (in the *De officiis*) on Panaetius.¹⁵⁷ These

¹⁵³ See esp. Plutarch, *Stoic. repugn.* 1038b: *hē gar oikeiōsis aesthēsis eoike tou oikeiou kai antilēpsis einai.*

¹⁵⁴ No English word quite covers the complex sense the Stoics gave to the term. 'Appropriation' and 'endearment' come close, but the former fails to capture the recognition of personal affinity the Stoic usage conveys, and the latter emphasizes it too much. But since 'appropriate' helps preserve the connection with correct action, which the Stoics intended, I have adopted it here. In Greek, *allotriion* (not one's own, alien) is the contrast term for *oikeion*, and *allotriōsis* (alienation, estrangement) is the corresponding noun form. Cicero typically renders *oikeiōsis* with either *commendatio* or *conciliatio*, with *conciatum* and *alienum* answering to the Greek *oikeion* and *allotriion*.

¹⁵⁵ His *Peri telōn*. See DL 7.85.

¹⁵⁶ *Fin.* 3.16-23.

¹⁵⁷ Early twentieth-century scholarship on *oikeiōsis* favored a historical and linguistic style of analysis, and several initial studies question the Stoic credentials of the doctrine by noting its linguistic affinities with older Aristotelian material. Von Arnim bases his attribution of the doctrine to Theophrastus on the syncretizing account of *oikeiōsis* preserved in Arius Didymus' survey of Peripatetic ethics. See H. von Arnim, *Arius Didymus' Abriss der peripatetischen Ethik* (Vienna, 1926). He is followed by F. Dirlmeier, 'Die Oikeiosislehre Theophrasts', *Philologus*, supplementary vol. xxx (1937). The view is challenged by M. Pohlenz, *Grundfragen der stoischen Philosophie [Grundfragen]* (Göttingen 1940) and C. Brink, 'Oikeiōsis and oikeiotēs: Theophrastus and Zeno on Nature in Moral Theory', *Phronesis*, 1 (1955-56), 123-45. Almost without exception, later scholars agree with Pohlenz and Brink in attributing the doctrine's origin to the Stoics, though they remain divided on the question whether it originated with Zeno or Chrysippus. Rist favors Zeno. See J. Rist, 'Zeno and Stoic Consistency', *Phronesis*, 22 (1977), 161-74. He is followed by B. Inwood, *Ethics*, 310-11, n. 27. For speculation as to a Chrysippean origin, see N. White, 'The Basis of Stoic Ethics' ['Basis'], *Harvard Studies in*

sources can be supplemented by a helpful but apparently incomplete account of *oikeiôsis* in one of Seneca's letters, as well as the still later and fragmentary treatise of the Stoic Hierocles. A multitude of brief references scattered through other ancient texts rounds out the surviving evidence.

Each of the central sources merits individual discussion, but there is enough common ground between them to supply us with a reasonably uncontroversial overview of the Stoic theory. Diogenes, Cicero and Hierocles each begin by alluding to a form of self-perception that enables an animal to orient itself properly in its environment, an awareness that is present as soon as the animal is born and continually thereafter.¹⁵⁸ Hierocles argues at length that animals continuously perceive not only what their own physical disposition--with its various limbs and appendages--is *for*, but also what the dispositions of other animals are *for*, and accordingly of the actions (like flight or aggression) that constitute a correct or appropriate response to them.¹⁵⁹ The Stoics hold that the same form of self-awareness explains an animal's behavior in relation to its own offspring and, in some cases, to other members of its species. Thus a central claim of the *oikeiôsis* theory is that animals are born with a capacity to perceive, in a teleologically informed way, their appropriate orientation in relation to a range of complex features of their environment.

Classical Philology, 83 (1979), 143-78. Cleanthes does not appear to be a serious candidate for authorship.

¹⁵⁸ By 'central texts' I mean, first and foremost, Diogenes Laertius 7.85-6; Hierocles, *Êthikê stoicheiôsis*; Cicero, *Fin.* 3.16-23 and *Off.* 1.11-12, 53-58, 3.27; Seneca, *Ep.* 76 and esp. 121. Cicero's *De finibus* account is likely to derive from Diogenes of Babylon, and the *De officiis* references are probably drawn from Panaetius and Antipater. Seneca's report appears to be taken from Posidonius. Other useful, though sometimes hostile and generally less complete sources include Plutarch, *Stoic. repugn.* (esp. Chapter 12); Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Mantissa* (esp. 150.20ff.); Epictetus, *Diss.* (esp. 1.6.16-21); Cicero, *Off.* 1.11-14. The account of Stoic ethics preserved by Stobaeus seems to allude to *oikeiôsis* at *Ecl.* 2.104. Academic and Peripatetic versions of the doctrine, all of which are likely to derive from Antiochus, include *Fin.* 4.16ff., 5.24ff; Aulus Gellius, *Noc. att.* 12.5,7 (SVF 3.181); Stob., *Ecl.* 2.47-48 and esp. 2.118-19.

¹⁵⁹ For the Stoic use of *ergon* in this teleological sense, see Hierocles *Êthikê stoicheiôsis*, col 1.51-7, 2.1-9 (LS 57C). Cf. the use of *energêma* at DL 7.107 (SVF 3.493).

The focus on animal behavior, however, is apparently not the central import of the Stoic doctrine. In each of the main accounts, this initial focus shifts to an analysis of psychological development in humans and, finally, to conclusions about the character of the human good. Unfortunately, Hierocles' otherwise continuous and detailed account contains a lengthy lacuna at just the point at which the case of human development and its ethical implications are about to be described. We must therefore rely on the short summaries of Cicero and Diogenes to reconstruct the crucial transition. Placed beside the text of Hierocles, these suggest that in the human case, the incipient self-perception of pre-rational children develops into a sophisticated set of conceptions (*ennoiai*) involving, as part of their content, an increasingly articulate awareness of the kind of creature one is.¹⁶⁰ The Stoics appear to regard these conceptions as partly (and perhaps primarily) constitutive of the rational faculty that guides and explains human behavior.¹⁶¹ Thus Diogenes describes the human transition to rational maturity as the point at which "reason supervenes as a craftsman upon impulse", and Cicero's account similarly alludes to the "order and harmony that governs conduct" in the human case. These descriptions suggest that the central goal of the *oikeiōsis* theory is to establish and characterize reason's role in shaping motivation as the distinguishing mark of human maturity and to fit this characterization within a more general account of animal psychology and action.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ That self-awareness becomes increasingly refined as one grows is one of the final points made by Hierocles before his manuscript becomes illegible. For discussion of this point, see C. Brittain, 'Non-rational Perception in the Stoics and Augustine' ['Perception'], *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 22 (2002), 253-308.

¹⁶¹ According to Chrysippus, "Reason is a collection of certain conceptions and preconceptions" (LS 53V, SVF: 2.841, trans. Long and Sedley). Cf. *Tusc.* 4.65: "if this [rational] soul has been so trained, if its power of vision has been so cared for that it is not blinded by error, the result is mind made perfect, that is, complete reason, and this means also virtue" (trans. King). Cf. also Seneca, *Ep.* 29.15.

¹⁶² SVF 2.841, LS53V: "A soul is noble or base according to the state of its commanding part with respect to its own divisions" (trans. Long and Sedley). Cf. DL 7.86. Early Stoic sources tend to mark this transition rather sharply, while later reports like Seneca's speak of a series of graduated developmental phases. This may suggest that later Stoics worked out the details of the process with greater care, perhaps under the pressure of criticism, but in each case the central focus of the theory seems to have been the crucial point at which children become capable of regulating their impulses and

3.3 *Two interpretations*

This overview more or less summarizes the picture that emerges if the reports of Cicero, Diogenes, and Hierocles are taken together. Though most commentators agree that the *oikeiōsis* theory is somehow central to Stoic ethics, there is little agreement about the way in which an argumentative appeal to it is supposed to proceed. We can distinguish two broad ways of understanding the ethical implications of the Stoic account that have so far dominated the interpretive literature. These interpretations are best illustrated by reference to a prominent feature of Diogenes' report, the impulse to self-preservation that characterizes animal behavior from birth:

They [sc. the Stoics] say that an animal has self-preservation [*to terein heauto*] as the object of its primary impulse [*protên hormên*], since Nature appropriates it from the beginning, as Chrysippus says in his *On ends* Book I, stating that the first object of appropriation for every animal is its own constitution [*sustasin*] and the awareness of this.¹⁶³

Diogenes here describes a form of motivation present in every animal, a *protê hormê* or primary impulse whose object is the preservation of the constitution nature has given the animal and of which it is aware. A variety of sources speak of this impulse in connection with *oikeiōsis*, describing self-preservation as among the first things an animal seeks and as a form of motivation consequent on its self-perception.¹⁶⁴

Commentators differ sharply about the role this impulse plays in the Stoic characterization of practical rationality, which the theory of *oikeiōsis* is apparently supposed to support. According to some, the primary impulse to self-preservation is primary not in the sense of being one of the *earliest* motivations observable in every animal but in the sense of being the *dominant* sort of motivation in every animal,

actions by reason. The sources variously identify seven and fourteen as the age at which children acquire this capacity.

¹⁶³ DL 7.85, trans. based on Long and Sedley 57A.

¹⁶⁴ Diogenes' account, however, is the only source (to my knowledge) that speaks not of a primary, appropriate object of impulse (*proton oikeion*), but actually of a primary impulse, or *protê hormê*.

including fully rational humans.¹⁶⁵ On this model, the *protê hormê* to self-preservation characterizes the motivation of a sage no less than that of non-rational animals and pre-rational humans.¹⁶⁶ In the case of the ideal child who will eventually become a sage, the acquisition of a capacity to shape her actions by reason does not supplant or supersede the impulse to self-preservation with which she was born; it rather determines the form this impulse is to take. Rather than preserving herself as an animal with animal needs, she one day begins to preserve herself *qua* rational, which is to say, she does the things a fully rational human should do.¹⁶⁷ Though the impulse to preserve herself is now an impulse to preserve her essentially rational nature, it nonetheless remains primary to her motivational outlook. Since, *ex hypothesi*, the sage is a fully rational agent, on this interpretation the impulse to self-preservation structures the motivations the Stoics regard as paradigmatically rational.

With some differences of emphasis, Pohlenz, Pembroke, and Inwood all defend this model of *oikeiôsis*. Each of them also claims that Stoic ethics is somehow derived not merely from the *oikeiôsis* account in general, but from the impulse to self-preservation in particular. Inwood provides the fullest recent defense of this view, attributing to Chrysippus the belief that "man's commitment to virtue could be derived . . . from the basic instinct of self-preservation".¹⁶⁸ On Inwood's account, Stoic virtue

¹⁶⁵ Analogous ambiguities arise for Cicero's use of *principium* at *Fin.* 3.17, though Kerford ('Search', 191n3) convincingly cites *Fin.* 3.21 as evidence that it ought to be understood temporally.

¹⁶⁶ Inwood (*Ethics*, 188) is explicit about this: "This 'primary' element is also more elementary in a logical sense, as we shall see". Later, "It follows that the term 'primary impulse' does not refer to some special desires or activities of recently born animals. It is, rather, a general description of animal behaviour which brings out the relation of such behaviour to the basic orientation which it has throughout its life" (193). Again, "I have argued that the primary impulse in Chrysippus' theory is a general impulse to self-preservation, not restricted to or characteristic of newborn animals" (218).

¹⁶⁷ See, e.g., M. Pohlenz, *Die Stoa* (Göttingen 1948), 115: "Wenn sich dann aber im Laufe der Jahre der Logos ausbildet und seiner selbst bewußt wird, wendet sich die Oikeiosis dem Logos als dem wahren Wesen des Menschen zu und erkennt in der reinen Entfaltung der Vernunft das, was für den Menschen wahrhaft 'naturgemäß' und 'gut' ist". Pohlenz goes on to identify human reason with that of the cosmos as a whole (117), a move Striker dismisses with the observation that "concern for my glass of water is not concern for yours, or for the whole mass of water in the universe". See G. Striker, 'Nature', 227.

¹⁶⁸ Inwood, *Ethics*, 194.

is "a development of [the desire for self-preservation] and is understood by analogy to it".¹⁶⁹ The impulse to preserve oneself is the "factor by reference to which the Stoics determined what is natural" and plays a criterial role in *eklogê*, the selection among indifferents that constitutes appropriate action in the human case.¹⁷⁰ According to Inwood's interpretation, then, the impulse to self-preservation is in fact central to the Stoic account of practical rationality: it provides a criterion of rational motivation that somehow determines the actions in whose perfect performance virtue consists.

A second line of interpretation holds that, in the human case, the later stages of psychological development involve a comprehensive *break* with the self-interested outlook characteristic of animals and pre-rational children. On this model, the content of Stoic ethics cannot be thought to derive from the pre-rational motive of self-preservation, because this motive is entirely superseded in the course of appropriate human development. Those favoring this general account, again with differences of detail, include Nicholas White, Gisela Striker, and Michael Frede. White, for example, comprehensively criticizes Pohlenz's understanding of the *oikeiôsis* doctrine, arguing that its focus on self-preservation and self-interest is mistakenly based on a reading of *De finibus* Four and Five, thereby confusing old Stoic views with a later Antiochean appropriation of the doctrine.¹⁷¹ Frede too rejects Pohlenz's supposition that the sage's motivational outlook is a "natural continuation" of the impulse to self-preservation. According to Frede, when one has fully acquired the correct notion of the good the impulse to self-preservation "entirely disappears".¹⁷² Striker suggests that

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 184.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 197-98.

¹⁷¹ See N. White, 'Basis'.

¹⁷² See M. Frede, 'Good', 85. Though Frede acknowledges that one sense of 'good' involves the benefit it confers (since it is through virtue that one achieves a good and happy life), he argues that this is not the feature of the good that explains its "irresistible attraction" for the sage. Instead, the sage pursues the pattern of behavior prescribed by nature because she is struck, first and foremost, with the sheer ingenuity and intricacy of nature's design. In Frede's view the sage's actions are explained neither by the narrow form of self-interest suggested by the impulse to self-preservation, nor the broader form of self-interest that marks the pursuit of a good and happy life.

what the Stoics need "is an argument to show that man's interests should at a certain point in life shift from self-preservation or even self-perfection to an exclusive interest in observing and following nature".¹⁷³ In her view, the sage's motivation "will not simply be an enlightened form of self-love."¹⁷⁴

Each of these interpretations is at points difficult to square with the available evidence. Contrary to Pohlenz, Pembroke and Inwood, there is little (if any) evidence to suggest that the Stoics somehow tried to *derive* their ethics from the impulse self-preservation in particular. Talk of such a derivation seems rather to have originated as a rather loose way of characterizing the importance Pohlenz first assigned to this motive, and it is now rather deeply embedded in one strand of the literature.¹⁷⁵ But besides the lack of any clear evidence for the supposed derivation, a deeper problem

¹⁷³ G. Striker, 'Role', 289.

¹⁷⁴ G. Striker, 'Nature', 231. Striker suggests that according to Cicero's account, "self-preservation is replaced as a primary goal by the desire for order and harmony" (ibid., 227).

¹⁷⁵ Thus Pohlenz: "Das Grundmotiv der Lehre ist, die Normen für die Lebensgestaltung aus einem Urtriebe der menschlichen Natur abzuleiten". See M. Pohlenz, *Grundfragen* (Göttingen, 1940), 12. Inwood has consistently defended this thesis, attributing to Chrysippus the belief that "man's commitment to virtue could be derived . . . from the basic instinct of self-preservation" (B. Inwood, *Ethics*, 194) and referring to the motive of self-preservation as the sole basis of Stoic ethics. Cf. B. Inwood, 'Comments on Professor Görgemanns' Paper: The Two Forms of *Oikeiōsis* in Arius and the Stoa' ['Comments'], in W. Fortenbaugh (ed.), *On Stoic and Peripatetic Ethics: The Work of Arius Didymus* (New Brunswick and London, 1983), 190-201; B. Inwood, 'Hierocles', 152-55; B. Inwood, *Ethics*, 218-19, 319-20n6. To my knowledge, the first appearance of this claim in the English literature on the subject occurs in Pembroke 'Oikeiōsis', 132: "The morality which the Stoics derived from self-preservation was capable not merely of condoning, but actually prescribing, suicide committed for the right reasons and by persons who had attained the full measure of this morality". Oddly, Pembroke does not seem to think that the Stoic endorsement of suicide might be a reason to reject this purported "derivation" of their ethics. As far as I can see, the talk of a derivation from the *motive* of self-preservation (as distinct from the *proton oikeion* and self-interest understood more broadly) has no support whatever in the ancient sources. If that is correct, there is little reason to think that the Stoics distinguished two kinds of *oikeiōsis* relation. Talk of such a derivation nevertheless appears in Frede, Striker, and White (though only as a foil to their own views), as well as in Annas. Thus White ('Basis', 154): "It would appear from the phrase *propter se* that this esteem of knowledge is not regarded as derived from the impulse to self-preservation." Striker ('Nature', 234): "The Stoic conception of the end does not arise as a natural continuation of one's concern for self-preservation . . .". Frede ('Good', 84): "This concern is no longer self-regarding, but a concern for the world's being a certain way". Traces of this model appear elsewhere in the literature, often without acknowledgment of the alternative views just cited. Ricardo Salles, for example, writes, "On [the Stoic] view, our moral evolution is determined by the development of our concern for self-preservation". See R. Salles, *The Stoics on Determinism and Compatibilism* (Ashgate, 2005), 48. Inwood regularly speaks of such a derivation, though he is vague about the sort of derivation he believes Chrysippus needs.

lies in explaining how this account is consistent with evidence that the Stoics recognized a form of *oikeiōsis* towards others and that they appealed to it to support their account of justice. According to Inwood, the Stoics in fact never integrated “personal” and “social” *oikeiōsis* in any unified account at all. On the contrary, the Stoics were obliged to introduce social *oikeiōsis* as a “later graft” onto the original theory, which initially dealt only with appropriation to oneself.¹⁷⁶ Many commentators have followed Inwood in assuming that the Stoics drew a basic distinction between personal and social forms of *oikeiōsis* in order to explain the natural basis of our duties towards others. Yet this line of interpretation attributes to the Stoics a disjointed and apparently *ad hoc* (Inwood's description) theory.

The model favored by Striker and Frede encounters other difficulties.¹⁷⁷ If the motivations of a fully rational agent are characterized by a fundamental shift away from self-concern, as their interpretation suggests, it is difficult to know what to make of the Stoic commitment to eudaimonism. Frede suggests, for instance, that the sage acts not from any motive of self-interest but because that is what cosmic nature intends her to do.¹⁷⁸ According to Striker, the sage's actions are not to be characterized in terms of self-perfection or as a result of self-love.¹⁷⁹ Yet a number of texts seem clearly to describe the motivations of every animal and even of Zeus as a form of self-concern. This primacy is perhaps strongest in Seneca's *Letter 121*, where Seneca

¹⁷⁶ This distinction and its elaboration are due almost wholly to Inwood: “In Stoic ethics two distinct ideas go under the label ‘*oikeiōsis*’: social *oikeiōsis* and personal *oikeiōsis*”. See B. Inwood, ‘Comments’, 192. Inwood suggests that, “Chrysippus’ failure to forge a firm and plausible link [between personal and social *oikeiōsis*] can be seen as the cause for the confusion seen in later discussions” (197). Again, “if the Stoics themselves had only an *ad hoc* explanation for the relation of the two *oikeiōseis*, it is less puzzling that this late Hellenistic text [i.e. that of Arius] failed to produce a philosophically coherent doctrine from them” (199). Subsequent commentators have often adopted this distinction with little critical discussion. Cf. esp. M. Schofield, ‘Justice’.

¹⁷⁷ For some discussion of these difficulties, see C. Brittain, ‘Rationality’, 249-50.

¹⁷⁸ See M. Frede, ‘Good’, 85.

¹⁷⁹ Striker is aware of the difficulties raised by Seneca's claim in particular, noting, “It remains true, as Seneca says (*Ep.* 121.17), that she will desire the good for herself.” See G. Striker, ‘Nature’, 234. She nevertheless seems to regard Seneca's thesis as compatible with the presence of other, ultimate, non-self-interested reasons for action.

relates the actions appropriate at each stage of life to a fundamental orientation towards self that is constant through each of them and to which a creature's behavior is referred: "The stages of infancy, boyhood, youth, and old age differ, but I am nonetheless the same, who have been an infant and a boy and also a man . . . an animal is first of all appropriated to itself, for there must be something to which other things are referred".¹⁸⁰ Seneca also appears to assume that self-concern is the dominant motivation in all action: "If I do all things because of concern for myself, concern for myself is prior to all things".¹⁸¹ Similarly strong statements of self-interest appear in a number of passages from Epictetus, who clearly intends them to apply even in the case of the sage.¹⁸²

It is difficult to dismiss these texts as presenting a merely anomalous or unorthodox point of view, for Cicero later says that concern for self is natural to the fool and the wise man alike.¹⁸³ Though these passages do not restrict this concern to the motive of self-preservation in particular, they equally do not appear to suggest that the sage's motives are characterized by a wholly impartial attachment to the cosmic order. Frede and Striker do not say whether the sage's abandonment of self-interest is compatible with the Stoic claim that every rational action is done for the sake of the agent's own happiness, but some of their remarks suggest that it is not.

¹⁸⁰ Though Seneca's account, it should be noted, may derive from Posidonius, to whom he refers by name (121.2). It therefore bears an uncertain relationship to that of Chrysippus.

¹⁸¹ Translation based on Gummere's in the Loeb edition: *Alia est aetas infantis, pueri, adolescentis, senis; ego tamen idem sum, qui et infans fui et puer et adulescens . . . Primum sibi ipsum conciliatur animal, debet enim aliquid esse, ad quod alia referantur . . . Si omnia propter curam mei facio, ante omnia est mei cura.* Though Seneca's 'I' can be understood generically (cf. Brittain 'Rationality', 250), he goes on to say that this motivation is supreme in every animal, which presumably includes human animals as well. Cf. *De fin.* III.16.

¹⁸² E.g. *Diss.* 1.19: "[T]his is not selfishness [*philauton*], this is the nature of the animal: he does everything for his own sake (*autou heneka*). For even the sun does everything for its own sake, and so, for that matter, does Zeus" (Dobbin's translation).

¹⁸³ *Fin.* 3.59. The Antiochean accounts of *oikeiôsis* similarly assign a clear priority to self-concern as a universal motivation and one not properly limited merely to the early stages of development. Although these sources are problematic, it is worth noting that they regularly present this claim as a point of agreement with the Stoic view (e.g., *Fin.* 4.25).

Though they diverge in their conclusions, both of these interpretations assume that the Stoic argument must somehow bridge the gap between self-directed forms of *oikeiôsis* and other-directed ones. The former interpretation holds that the impulse to self-preservation fits clumsily with the other-regarding duties the Stoic ethic enjoins. The latter holds that, in the case of the fully rational agent, this motive is entirely abandoned, replaced by an impartial concern for conformity to nature as a whole. In what follows I want to suggest that the emphasis given to self-preservation in both accounts is misplaced. What I propose, instead, is that the Stoics take care to demonstrate the self-preserving behavior of animals primarily as a way of arguing that animals *perceive* themselves. Since the Stoics regard self-perception as a necessary condition of self-preservation, their emphasis on the latter can be understood as an argument for the former. I suggest that the Stoics emphasize this impulse not because they regard it as somehow central to ethics, but because they hold that it can only be explained by the cognitive account of motivation they wish to defend. In particular, they argue that the coordinated, self-preserving behavior observable in animals is possible only insofar as the animal's faculties enable it to grasp its own nature, and to understand, however incipiently, what its own faculties are *for*. I now consider the evidence for this claim.

3.4 Hierocles on self-perception

Each of the interpretations of Stoic *oikeiôsis* so far considered assumes that the self-preserving motivation present in animals is a primary concern of the Stoic theory as such. Each also treats the accompanying Stoic claims about animal self-perception as a more or less ancillary point. But a close reading of the evidence suggests that, on the contrary, the primary purpose of the *oikeiôsis* account is to argue for Stoic claims about self-perception. Since the Stoics regard self-perception as a necessary condition

of self-preservation, their emphasis on the latter can be understood as an argument for the former. Animal self-perception is the central focus both of Seneca's letter on *oikeiōsis* and of the extended argument in Hierocles' fragmentary treatise. Inwood argues convincingly that Hierocles' primary aim is to defend the Stoic theory of *oikeiōsis* against critics who reject Stoic claims about self-perception in particular.¹⁸⁴ One class of these critics appears to deny that self-perception occurs at all; the other denies that it occurs as soon as an animal is born.¹⁸⁵ Hierocles aims to show why these so-called *braduterōi*--slow-minded persons--are mistaken.¹⁸⁶ His argument is worth considering in greater detail.

The manuscript begins with a short argument to show that "an animal differs in two respects from what is not an animal: perception and also impulse".¹⁸⁷ Hierocles then narrows his focus to the first of these: "We do not need to speak of the latter of these for the moment, but it seems appropriate to say a few things about perception, for this contributes to knowledge of the first appropriate thing [i.e. the animal's own constitution], which we said is the principle that constitutes the best starting point for the elements of ethics."¹⁸⁸ In the text that follows, Hierocles attacks the critics of self-perception by drawing their attention, first and foremost, to a whole range of behavioral phenomena easily taken for granted. All animals, he claims, behave from the moment they are born in ways that betray an awareness of their own disposition and its relation to the elements of their environment. This awareness has a teleological component: bulls not only sense that they have horns; they are aware that the function of horns is *to gore other animals*. Other animals also perceive the function of horns and keep away from them. But no one has instructed animals in the use of horns or

¹⁸⁴ B. Inwood, 'Hierocles'. Inwood's conclusions are endorsed in A. Long, 'Self-perception'.

¹⁸⁵ A. Long 'Self-perception', 255.

¹⁸⁶ Col. 1.39.

¹⁸⁷ Col. 1.31-32 (my translation).

¹⁸⁸ Col. 1.34-37 (my translation).

warned them about the threat they present. They naturally behave in ways that take both this function and the vulnerability of their own constitutions into account.¹⁸⁹ The same form of perception is invoked to explain a range of teleologically appropriate behavior in animals. Thus Hierocles points out, for instance, that an animal "knows" in a given circumstance to strain its ears rather than its eyes in order to hear a sound.

In the first two thirds of his manuscript Hierocles appeals to observations of this sort to establish three claims: (1) that animals perceive themselves as soon as they are born and continually thereafter, (2) that they act in ways that demonstrate an attachment to the self they perceive, and (3) that self-perception is a necessary condition of any form of animal behavior whatsoever.¹⁹⁰ Much of Hierocles' argument is occupied with marshalling empirical evidence in support of (2), but he is primarily interested in (2) in order to demonstrate the truth of (3). This point is confirmed by his explication of a further principle that appears to have an anterior basis in Stoic action theory. Its details are obscure, and Hierocles does not formulate them very clearly, but its general import is clear enough. The idea is that any governing faculty [*dunamis hêgemonikê*] and *a fortiori* the faculty of *aisthêsis* is reflexive: it applies not only to objects external to the animal but to itself as well.¹⁹¹ Hierocles uses this principle to support the conclusion that "since perception itself is also a governing faculty . . . it governs through itself and perceives itself *before* it grasps any other object" (emphasis mine).¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ See col. 1.34-9, 51-7, 2.1-9 (LS 57E).

¹⁹⁰ For (1), see col 5.38-6.24; for (2), see col. 6.24-7.50. (3) is implicit throughout, but see esp. col. 6.10-24. Cf. also *Fin.* 3.16.16-18: *Fieri autem non posset ut appeterent aliquid nisi sensum haberent sui eoque se diligenter.*

¹⁹¹ Cf. Epictetus, *Diss.* 1.26.15: "This, then, is a starting point in philosophy, an *aithêsis* of the state of one's own *hêgemonikon*" (trans. Oldfather).

¹⁹² C. Brittain ('Perception', 269) and B. Inwood ('Hierocles', 166-67) briefly discuss the principle, which is enunciated at col. 6.10-17. The conclusion Hierocles wishes to draw from it appears at 6.17-20: *ho de paraplêsios logos kata pasês archês, hôste kai hê aisthêsis, epeidê kai autê dunamis estin archikê, . . . dêlon hoti archoit' an aph' heautês kai prin tôn heterôn tinos antilabesthai, heautês aisthanoito.* "And the same reasoning applies to every [such] principle, so that, since perception itself is

Though Hierocles does not give a very satisfactory account of the rationale behind this general claim, it appears to depend on the assumption that a faculty responsible for coordinating the behavior of an animal in its environment has to take the nature of both into account. The appropriate responses of a organism in relation to its surroundings depend both on the nature of external objects and on the nature of the organism itself. Accordingly, the animal's controlling faculties must grasp the character of both if they are to coordinate and control its responses properly. It is therefore insufficient if the faculties that control its motivational impulses are directed only at those external objects and stimuli to which the animal may superficially appear to respond. This line of thought comports with the argument Hierocles has developed throughout his treatise as well as with independent reports of the Stoic view. The Stoics hold that the highly coordinated behavior an animal displays in relation to its environment implies a teleologically-informed self-awareness, the perception of a given course of action as appropriate *to oneself*.¹⁹³

Hierocles' inference from the empirical evidence he collects to claims about animal self-perception appears to suppose the plausibility of a broader perception-based account of action.¹⁹⁴ That is to say, his argument takes for granted the availability of a more general explanation of action in terms of impulses resulting from perceptive impressions.¹⁹⁵ Someone with a rival explanation of action might therefore

also a governing faculty, . . . it is clear that it governs through itself and perceives itself before it grasps any other object" (col. 6.20-23, my translation).

¹⁹³ This would appear to be the point of Seneca's remark that an animal is appropriated to self because "there must be something to which other things are referred" (*Ep.* 121, trans. Gummere) and of Hierocles' insistence that self-perception is the basis of the many unusual animal behaviors he catalogues.

¹⁹⁴ See col. 6.10-24.

¹⁹⁵ What we would call actions, that is. The Stoics follow Aristotle in denying a capacity for action, strictly understood, to animals. Yet in the Stoic view animal movement of any sort is prompted by a hormetic impression (*phantasia hormetikê*) which belongs to a subclass of impressions generally and whose content, roughly speaking, is the perception of an object as something to be pursued or avoided. Moreover, the type of response that a hormetic impression elicits is closely tied to its representational content: whether an animal is attracted or repulsed depends on whether the impression represents the object either as something appropriate or non-appropriate to the animal. This account raises numerous

challenge the principle that animals perceive themselves by challenging the more general Stoic principle that coordinated animal activity implies perception of any form.¹⁹⁶ Self-directed forms of action would seem to imply self-directed forms of perception only in the absence of some other innate motivational mechanism. Yet Hierocles' points carry a good deal of *prima facie* force: the highly coordinated forms of animal behavior he describes seems to demand an explanatory principle, and the Stoics' cognitive account of action and self-perception supplies one.¹⁹⁷

The primary concern of Hierocles' treatise, then, is not to show that all animals preserve themselves but that all animals *perceive* themselves. Though not often remarked by commentators, this emphasis on self-perception is present in each of the main *oikeiōsis* accounts. These accounts independently confirm the suggestion that the Stoics are interested in the self-preserving behavior of animals primarily because they believe this behavior to be a consequence of self-perception. This priority is perfectly explicit in Cicero, for instance, when he writes that, "neither could it happen that [animals] would seek anything at all unless they had self-awareness (*sensum haberent sui*) and thereby [emphasis mine] self-love".¹⁹⁸ Similarly, according to Seneca, "all animals have an awareness (*sensus*) of their constitution and *for that reason* can manage their limbs as readily as they do . . . they must necessarily have a feeling of the principle which they obey and by which they are controlled" [emphasis mine].¹⁹⁹

questions, particularly in the animal case, about the degree to which hormetic impressions must have a conceptual or cognitive structure if they are to play this role. For discussion of these points, see C. Brittain, 'Perception', 253-74.

¹⁹⁶ Hierocles' opponents clearly do challenge it. Hierocles' reply seems to assume that they have ill-considered grounds for doing so.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Seneca *Ep.* 121.19: "Why should the hen show no fear of the peacocks or the goose, and yet run from the hawk, which is a so much smaller animal not even familiar to the hen?" (trans. Gummere)

¹⁹⁸ *Fin.* 3.16, trans. Woolf. The centrally important claim of the *oikeiōsis* doctrine is not (1) that creatures preserve themselves as soon as they are born but (2) that they perceive themselves as soon as they are born. The Stoic emphasis on (1) is explained by the fact that they take it to imply (2).

¹⁹⁹ *Ep.* 121.12 (trans. Gummere, with changes). Cf. Epictetus, *Diss.* 1.20, 'How the Reasoning Faculty Contemplates Itself'. Cf. also Tertullian, *De carne Christi*, Chapter 12 (SFV 2.845): "And if I may use

To my knowledge, none of the recent efforts to explain the ethical significance of *oikeiōsis* has had much to say about this feature of the Stoic theory.²⁰⁰ I think it matters for an understanding of Stoic ethics, however, for it suggests that a basic aim of the *oikeiōsis* theory is to make a particular psychological explanation of action central to Stoics' account of proper ethical development. The Stoics insist that an animal's behavior can *only* be explained through a reflexive perception of what is appropriate (*kathêkon*) to it.²⁰¹ This point is particularly clear in Seneca's account, which emphasizes that animals are often observed to act in ways that comport with their disposition even in the teeth of pain.

3.5 *The ethical import of oikeiōsis*

I have so far argued that self-perception rather than self-preservation is the central concern of the Stoic *oikeiōsis* theory. With this general framework in mind, I want next to consider the details of the ethical argument from this account. We know that in the lost portion of his manuscript Hierocles somehow made a connection between his extended analysis of self-perception and some of the central claims of Stoic ethics. It is also clear that this transition was made in no very great amount of space. The papyrus as a whole runs to twelve columns, the first eight of which are

the expression for the sake of emphasis, I would say, "*Animae anima sensus est*"----"Sense is the soul's very soul." Now, since it is the soul that imparts the faculty of perception to all (that have sense), and since it is itself that perceives the very senses, not to say properties, of them all how is it likely that it did not itself receive sense as its own natural constitution? Whence is it to know what is necessary for itself under given circumstances, from the very necessity of natural causes, if it knows not its own property, and what is necessary for it? To recognize this indeed is within the competence of every soul; it has, I mean, a practical knowledge of itself, without which knowledge of itself no soul could possibly have exercised its own functions. I suppose, too, that it is especially suitable that man, the only rational animal, should have been furnished with such a soul as would make him the rational animal, itself being pre-eminently rational. Now, how can that soul which makes man a rational animal be itself rational if it be itself ignorant of its rationality, being ignorant of its own very self?" (trans. Holmes)

²⁰⁰ It has certainly been discussed, by Long ('Self-perception') among others, but little effort has been made to connect it to Stoic ethical claims.

²⁰¹ Thus DL 7.107 (SVF 3.493): Proper function (*energêma*) is an activity appropriate (*oikeion*) to constitutions (*kataskeuais*) that accord with nature" (trans. Long and Sedley). Cf. Stobaeus, *Ecl.*, 2.85.13ff. (SVF 3.494); Mar. Ant., *Med.* 9.5.

devoted to a defense of the claim that animals perceive themselves. This is followed by a heavily lacunose segment and a gap of nearly two columns. When the text resumes again in column nine Hierocles is busy introducing several types of social *oikeiōsis* relation that apply to humans. When he is glimpsed for the last time in column eleven, he has progressed to a discussion of the social attributes of human beings in particular. The term '*telos*' appears three times in the last ten lines of the papyrus, occurring once in the phrase 'the end for us' (*to telos hēmin*).

To see more clearly how Hierocles' transition was made and why self-perception was central to the Stoics' ethical argument, we may turn again to Diogenes' account, which explicitly connects these elements of the Stoic theory with ethical conclusions. Moreover, Diogenes presents what appears to be a summary of an analysis found in Chrysippus' lost treatise *On ends*. According to Cicero, in this treatise Chrysippus offered a survey of various animal species, together with an account of "what constitutes the ultimate good proper to each".²⁰² Diogenes' report of this treatise is particularly striking for its inclusion of a three-fold classification of organisms that closely recalls the main biological divisions of Aristotle's *De anima*:

They [sc. the Stoics] say that an animal has self-preservation [*to tērein heauto*] as the object of its first impulse, since Nature from the beginning appropriates it, as Chrysippus says in his *On ends* book I. The first thing appropriate to every animal, he says, is its own constitution [*sustasin*] and the awareness [*suneidēsin*] of this.²⁰³ For Nature was not likely either to alienate the animal itself, or to make it and then neither alienate it or nor appropriate it. So it remains to say that in constituting the animal, Nature appropriated it to itself. This is why the animal rejects what is harmful and accepts what is appropriate. They hold it false to say, as some people do, that pleasure is the object of animals' first impulse. For pleasure, they say, if it does occur, is a byproduct which arises only when Nature all by itself has searched out and adopted the proper requirements [*enarmozonta*] for a creature's constitution

²⁰² *Fin.* 4.28., trans. Rackham.

²⁰³ Pohlenz reads *sunaisthēsis* for *suneidēsin*, no doubt on the strength of Hierocles' account. For considerations against this emendation, see J. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1969), 44ff. For some defense of it, see B. Inwood, *Ethics*, 313n42.

[*sustasei*], just as animals [then] frolic and plants bloom. Nature, they say, is no different in regard to plants and animals at the time when it directs [*oikonomei*] animals as well as plants without impulse and sensation, and in us certain processes of a vegetative kind take place. But since animals have the additional faculty of impulse, through the use of which they go in search of what is appropriate [*ta oikeia*] to them, what is natural for them is to be administered [*dioikeisthai*] in accordance with their impulse. And since reason, by way of a more perfect management, has been bestowed on rational beings, to live correctly in accordance with reason comes to be natural for them. For reason supervenes as the craftsman of impulse.²⁰⁴

This passage offers, in highly compressed form, a biological classification of organisms organized within a hierarchy such that the more complex forms of organism include the faculties of the lower types, but not vice versa. Plants are equipped with a vegetative constitution that regulates growth and generation; animals possess the additional faculty of impulse, which enables locomotion. Both of these faculties are present in the human case, together with that of reason, whose task is the supervision of impulse. How does this account fit with the belabored emphasis on self-perception in Hierocles? What conclusion is it supposed to support and how does it support it?

One way of answering these questions would be as follows. We might suppose that in his lost treatise, Chrysippus gave an analysis of non-rational (and pre-rational) animals according to which the *telos* of each depends on securing the particular objects or outcomes that are *oikeion* to their non-rational constitutions. According to this interpretation, when Chrysippus writes that every animal has an *oikeiôsis* relation towards things appropriate to its constitution, he implies that the animal's realization of its end will depend on its success in securing these things.²⁰⁵ A young frog will achieve its *telos* only if it searches out and secures those objects (flies, perhaps) that are *oikeion* to the constitution of a young frog, and so on. On this rather

²⁰⁴ D.L., 7.85-86, translation based on Long and Sedley (57A). The term '*dioikeisthai*' similarly appears in Galen's report of Chryippus' *oikeiôsis* doctrine, in reference to a putative problem that arises for the Stoics in explaining "the governing faculty in children" (*to peri tês tôn paidôn dioikêseôs*).

intuitive reading, the fact that a frog must catch flies in order to realize its *telos* will be a consequence of its non-rational and frog-like nature, and a creature with a different sort of nature will have a correspondingly different sort of *telos*. In the case of a rational creature, the Stoics might argue, the end will not depend on securing what is appropriate to one's bodily nature at all, but only on cultivating one's nature *qua* rational, something that does not depend on any outcome beyond one's control.²⁰⁶ This is an intuitive way of trying to read the evidence, because we tend to suppose that the welfare of rational and non-rational creatures really *does* consist in the realization of external, contingent aims. If catching flies is not good for a young frog, it is difficult to see what is.

An argument that proceeded along these lines, however, would commit the Stoics to a basic disanalogy between the animal and human case. For in the human case, teleological success does not depend on securing the primary objects of *oikeiōsis* at all, but only on pursuing them in way nature directs. Since external circumstances cannot disturb the virtue and happiness of rational agents, the significance of what is *oikeion* for humans cannot consist in the fact that realizing the human good requires one actually to secure the outcomes it is rational and appropriate to pursue. On the contrary, the import of what is *oikeion* for humans is exhausted by its role in determining the content of appropriate (*kathēkonta*) actions.²⁰⁷ In the Stoic view the human *telos* is wholly achieved *in nostra actione*, as Cicero puts it, in the perfect performance of actions that are up to the agent.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ As I understand it, this is broadly the interpretation proposed by Tad Brennan in *The Stoic Life* (Oxford, 2005). Cf. T. Brennan, 'Stoic Souls in Stoic Corpses' in D. Frede (ed.), *Body and Soul in Ancient Philosophy* (Berlin and New York), 2009, 389-408.

²⁰⁷ See, e.g., SVF 3.145.

²⁰⁸ *Fin.* 4.15. More precisely, this is what Cicero denies on behalf of Antiochus, yet it clearly refers to the Stoic view. Cf. *Fin.*, 3.32.

Once we recognize this, we can see that the intuitive way of understanding Diogenes' report of Chrysippus' treatise in fact saddles the Stoics with a highly implausible form of argument. For according to this way of understanding the *oikeiôsis* account, the Stoics hold that the well-being of a non-human animal depends on its success in securing the various external arrangements beneficial to its constitution, while the welfare of a human being consists only in *pursuing* these outcomes appropriately. This is just the form of argument that Cicero, speaking for Antiochus, seems to attribute to the Stoics in *De finibus* 4. Cicero there faults Chrysippus for disregarding the needs of the body in the human case:

How and where did you suddenly abandon the body and all those things that are in accordance with nature but not in our power . . . ? How is it that so many of the things originally commended by nature are suddenly forsaken by wisdom? Even if we were seeking the supreme good not of a human being but of some living creature who had nothing but a mind . . . even this mind would not accept the end you are proposing. It would want health and freedom from pain, and would also desire its own preservation as well as the security of those goods I just mentioned. It would establish as its end a life in accordance with nature, and this means, as I said *possession (habere)* of things that are in accordance with nature, either all of them or as many as possible of the most important.²⁰⁹

Against the Stoics, Antiochus emphasizes that teleological success requires the actual *possession* of what accords with nature, not merely its pursuit. It is easy to conclude on the basis of Cicero's language here that the Stoics were prepared to concede this in the animal case. If that is so, then rational human maturity is marked by an abandonment of those things that, by the Stoics' own admission, matter to the *telos* of non-rational creatures (and perhaps that of pre-rational humans). The Stoics must then have argued that, in stark contrast to the *telos* of non-rational animals, the human *telos* is structured not by what a rational agent tries to secure, but by the rational way in

²⁰⁹ *Fin.* 4.27-8, trans. Woolf, emphasis mine

which she tries to secure it. When a human being first acquires her rational nature, on this reading, she acquires an end that abandons the resources essential to the *telos* of all other animals. This is the way in which Antiochus appears to represent the Stoic argument, which he finds absurd.

There are indications, however, that this is not how Chrysippus argued. It is worth noting, first, that Cicero himself says both that the force of the *oikeiōsis* argument depends on specifying the end analogously for each species and that the Stoics themselves *acknowledge* this principle.²¹⁰ More importantly, however, the summary of Stoic *oikeiōsis* preserved by Diogenes assumes just the sort of structural similarity between the case of rational and non-rational creatures that, according to Cicero, the inductive structure of the *oikeiōsis* argument requires. The text of Diogenes does not identify the natural life for animals with *achieving* what is *oikeion* but rather with the pursuit of these things via the mechanism of impulse, that is, with the condition in which they are administered [*dioikeisthai*] in a way that comports with their psychic faculties.²¹¹ Though animals go looking for what is *oikeion* and avoid what not, there is nothing in the passage to suggest that Chrysippus held that the realization of an animal's *telos* depends on success in this endeavor.

This analysis of the animal case is exactly what we should expect from the Stoics, who argue that the cosmos is rationally ordered in the highest degree. Human teleological success depends wholly on a virtuous disposition expressing itself through appropriate actions (*kathêkonta*) that conform to this order. Construed analogously to

²¹⁰ *Fin.* 4.32-33: “How, moreover, is the axiom to be retained, admitted as it is even by the Stoics and accepted universally, that the end which is the subject of our inquiry is analogous for all species? For the analogy to hold, every other species also would have to find its end in that part of the organism which in that particular species is the highest part; since that, as we have seen, is how the Stoics conceive the end of man” (trans. Rackham). Since it can't be true that the Stoics both (1) concede that an account of the *telos* will arise analogously across species (at least as Cicero intends this claim) and (2) maintain that the *telos* of non-rational animals, in contrast to humans, does *not* depend on *hêgemonikon* alone, either Antiochus or Cicero must be misrepresenting the Stoic view at this point. I reject (2), which Cicero never quite asserts and which external evidence discredits.

²¹¹ Cf. Plutarch, *Stoic repug.* 1035c.

the human case, for which we have more detailed evidence, the *telos* of non-rational animals ought similarly to consist in the performance of those functions that are *kathêkon* to their constitution. For although cosmic nature has arranged things in a perfectly rational manner, she evidently has not arranged things so that non-human animals infallibly achieve what is *oikeiôn* for them any more than she has done this for humans.²¹² To suppose that the perfect performance of *kathêkonta* is sufficient for the human *telos* but insufficient for that of non-rational animals is to undermine the inductive force of the *oikeiôsis* account. If Chrysippus defended such a disanalogy in his lost treatise, he could only have rendered his analysis of the human *telos* implausible by drawing attention to the way in which it differs from the animal case.

There is no need to construe Diogenes' report (or Cicero's, for that matter) in this way, however. On the contrary, the text explicitly distinguishes a category of results that, though they sometimes accompany the pursuit of what is appropriate to an organism's nature, are not the proper objects of its governing faculty. This category includes flowers in the case of plants and pleasure in the case of animals, incidental results that may attend the proper functions of the organism but are to be distinguished from the outcome its faculties infallibly *may secure*, appropriate action itself.

At least two additional points appear to support this picture. First, it is clear that the Stoics do extend the concept of appropriate (*kathêkon*) function to plants and animals and that, as in the human case, these organisms may also fall short of nature's standard through a deficiency of their leading faculty.²¹³ According to Plutarch, we ought not wonder

²¹² It would presumably be odd if, in his *Treatise on Ends*, Chrysippus defended a teleological scheme according to which there is a basic conflict between the order of the universe and the *telos* of non-rational creatures (insofar as *their telos* depends on external circumstances), but no such conflict between the order of the universe and the *telos* of rational ones (insofar as their *telos* does not). Cf. *Tusc.* 5.38.

²¹³ Thus DL 7.107 (SVF 3.493): "Furthermore, the term 'duty' (*kathêkon*) is applied to that for which, when done, a reasonable defense can be adduced, e.g., harmony in the tenor of life's processes, which

if irrational animals follow Nature more closely than rational ones; for animals are, in fact, outdone in this by plants, to which Nature has given neither imagination (*phantasian*) nor impulse (*hormên*), nor desire for something different (*orexin heterôn*), which causes men to shake themselves free from what Nature desires; but plants, as though they were fastened by chains, remain in the power of nature, always traversing the one path along which Nature leads them.²¹⁴

Plutarch here suggests that failures to conform to nature, when they occur in non-rational animals (and rarely, perhaps, in plants), arise just as they do in the human case, from a defect in the faculty that coordinates the organism's functions. Since the complexity of this faculty determines the dispositions and behavior in which a creature's end consists, it also determines the creature's proneness to err in respect of nature's standard.²¹⁵ Yet in each case it appears that an organism's teleological success or failure depends wholly on the soundness of its *hêgemonikon* and, accordingly, on the execution of the functions appropriate to it.²¹⁶

Second, on the Stoic account the human soul is structurally analogous to that of non-rational animals insofar as it has no motivational faculty whose dictates may oppose the ruling part.²¹⁷ Thus the rational *hêgemonikon* (*logistikon*) that governs human action through the mechanism of assent answers to a non-rational *hêgemonikon* in animals and, in some sense, to the non-perceptive *hêgemonikon* of plants. In the

indeed pervades the growth of plants and animals. For even in plants and animals, they hold, you may discern fitness of behavior" (trans., Hicks). Cf. Stob., *Ecl.* 2.85.13ff. (SVF 3.494).

²¹⁴ *De amor. prol.*, 493e, trans. Hembold.

²¹⁵ It is worth noting that the souls of pre-rational children, in the Stoic view, are similar to those of non-rational animals. Cf. M. Frede, 'Reason', 50-63.

²¹⁶ Cf. LS 53V (SVF 2.841): "A soul is noble or base according to the state of its commanding part with respect to its own divisions" (trans. Long and Sedley). As Long points out, "the virtues are physical states of the *hêgemonikon*, and statements about them are objective". See. A. Long, 'Language and Thought in Stoicism', in A. Long (ed.), *Problems in Stoicism* (London, 1971), 75-113 at 103. The *hêgemonikon* of a plant is its roots. See *De nat. deor.* 2.11.

²¹⁷ See esp. Epictetus, *Diss.* 2.8.1-8. Cf. Cicero, *Off.* 1.11-12. I have in mind the Stoic view prior to whatever modifications Panaetius and Posidonius may have made to Chrysippus' account of the soul. According to Chrysippus, there is nothing in non-rational animals that answers to an appetitive or spirited part of the soul. See SVF 2.906. The Stoics often use '*psychê*' to refer to the *hêgemonikon* in particular. See SE, *M.7.234* (LS 53F).

case of rational agents and non-rational animals alike, behavior is wholly determined by the appropriate or inappropriate impulses that flow from this unified perceptive faculty.²¹⁸ What distinguishes the rational faculty in humans from the animal case is neither a fundamentally different form of psychic organization nor the perceptive nature of the ruling part, but the rather the sophistication of the *hêgemonikon*'s perceptive properties.²¹⁹ Specifically, the faculty of assent in humans differs from the case of animal perception in virtue of the *concepts* it acquires and employs.²²⁰

These points suggest that Chrysippus did not attempt to derive the content of the human *telos* in a way that differs sharply from the case of other animals. To judge from his own words, Cicero's Antiochean criticisms of the Stoic argument do not represent the Stoic view quite fairly.²²¹ Chrysippus rather appears to have argued in just the way that Cicero says the *oikeiôsis* argument requires and which Cicero says the Stoics agree it requires. He held that the end for each kind of living creature consists in the performance of the functions (*kathêkonta*) appropriate to its constitution, and that the mechanism of self-perception enables it to perform these functions. That is why a turtle on its back struggles to right itself in the way that its constitution requires, though it feels no pain and achieves no pleasure in doing so.²²² In humans and animals alike, teleological failure results from the inhibition of proper functioning.²²³

²¹⁸ As Frede puts it, the "Stoic view is not that we acquire reason in addition to something we already have at birth but rather that something we already have at birth, namely the *hêgemonikon* of the irrational soul, is transformed into something else, namely reason". See M. Frede, 'Reason', 51.

²¹⁹ Cf. Mar. Ant., *Med.* 11.1.

²²⁰ That is to say, the mechanism that governs impulse is non-conceptual in animals and conceptual in humans, at least given the Stoic account of concepts. See SVF 2.841, LS 53V. Cf. also C. Brittain, 'Perception', 261.

²²¹ As far as I can see, Cicero says nothing that clearly controverts the interpretation I have offered, though he certainly obscures it at *Fin.* 4.34. Whether he does so intentionally or not is unclear.

²²² See Seneca, *Ep.* 121.7-8: "The proof that it is not fear of pain which prompts [animals] thus, is, that even when pain checks them they struggle to carry out their natural motions" (trans. Gummere).

²²³ See esp. Mar. Ant., *Med.* 8.41: "To the animal nature a thwarting of sense perception is an evil, as is also to the same nature the thwarting of impulse. There is similarly some other thing that can thwart the constitution of plants and is an evil to them. Thus then the thwarting of intelligence is an evil to the

Though it is surely beyond the cognition of animals to recognize that the ground of value does not lie in the contingent outcomes at which their actions are directed, this recognition is not beyond the reach of human cognition, in the Stoic view. That is why, as Cicero says, a rational human agent will come to understand that the end of human action is not any external result, but the *order and harmony that governs conduct*, an order inhering in her actions themselves. Once introduced to a perception of this order, as only a rational agent can be, the sage esteems it more highly than the acquaintance who first made the introduction. “Your friends,” Cicero says of the Stoics, “came to behold virtue in all her beauty and forthwith flung aside all they had ever seen besides virtue herself.”²²⁴ Animals, we may suppose, are less susceptible to the beauty of virtue.²²⁵ But the Stoics nonetheless suppose that the ordered action through which their *telos* is achieved is structurally analogous to the human case.²²⁶

3.6 Stoic perfectionism

We are now in a position to see the way in which the Stoics drew ethical conclusions from an analysis of animal behavior. Chrysippus, I suggest, maintained from the outset that a *creature's* end consists solely in the perfection of its highest faculty and in the functions that express this perfection. The Stoic argument for this conclusion is implicit in the surviving *oikeiōsis* accounts:

(P1) The *telos* of each organism is realized through the perfection of those

intelligent nature. Transfer the application of all this to thyself.” (trans. Haines). Cf. 8.46: “Nothing can befall a man that is not a contingency natural to man; nor befall an ox, that is not natural to oxen, nor a vine, that is not natural to a vine, nor to a stone that is not proper to it. If therefore only what is natural and customary befalls each, why be aggrieved?” (trans. Haines)

²²⁴ *Fin.* 4.42.

²²⁵ Cf. *Off.* 1.14.

²²⁶ Cf. *Mar. Ant., Med.* 9.5: “No man can be good without correct notions as to the nature of the whole and his own constitution”. (trans. Haines)

properties that coordinate and explain its behavior.

(P2) These properties belong to the *hêgemonikon*, which in animals and humans is an essentially perceptive faculty.

(C) The human *telos* is realized through the perfection of the *logistikon*, the rational *hêgemonikon* that controls human behavior through rational perception.

As the surviving accounts of *oikeiôsis* show, (P2) is supported by empirical observation, together with principles drawn from Stoic psychology. Against the Epicureans, the Stoics urge that animal behavior *cannot* be explained by the external stimulus of pleasure. Animals, they point out, perform the functions appropriate to their makeup even when it is painful for them to do so. Against the Peripatetics, the Stoics urge that animal behavior can *only* be explained by the mechanism of self-perception. How else, they ask, is the highly coordinated yet untutored behavior of animals possible? The capacity for self-perception explains the teleologically informed behavior animals everywhere display. Both of these features of the *oikeiôsis* account appeal to empirical observations to support a specific psychological account of action.

(P1), on the other hand, can be understood as the Stoic version of a more general perfectionist assumption accepted by the Academic and Peripatetic traditions. Both traditions argue that the human good is to be grounded in an account of the features essential to human nature. Both agree that realizing the good depends, at least in part, on the perfection of those features. What is distinctive in the Stoic view is the claim that the *telos* of each creature *wholly* depends on the perfection of its *hêgemonikon*, the element of the Stoic account that supports a monistic conception of the human good. Since the condition of an agent's *hêgemonikon* depends on the agent alone, in the Stoic view, (P1) explains why it is possible for each creature to act

appropriately regardless of external conditions, as Seneca's turtle does when it struggles to right itself.

How good is the Stoic argument? It is better, I suggest, than it may first appear. (P2) depends on a substantive and carefully worked out psychological explanation of action. Though the Stoics' opponents may reject it, in doing so they accept a heavy explanatory burden: they must explain the highly sophisticated and apparently teleological forms of behavior that Stoic theory both emphasizes and offers to explain. (P1), on the other hand, may be thought to possess at least one clear advantage over rival, Antiochean formulations of perfectionism. For one of the central challenges for any perfectionist account of the human good is to provide a non-arbitrary criterion by which to identify the properties of human nature on whose perfection that good depends. The Stoic theory offers a tidy answer to this problem. The Stoics agree with Aristotle that a central reason for seeking an account of the human good is to provide a conception of the good life that may serve as a deliberative guide to action, a target at which the deliberating agent may aim.²²⁷ If we then ask what features of our nature we are to cultivate in order to achieve this good, the Stoics reply that we ought to cultivate just those features that control and explain our behavior. What other features, after all, ought to figure in an account of living well? The relevant set of properties, they argue, is the set that explains human action in the first place.

The Stoic theory of *oikeiōsis* thus satisfies a central desideratum of perfectionism in a clear and compelling way, one that draws on the Stoic vision of the cosmos as a whole. Since the Stoics situate their account of the human *telos* within a broader teleological analysis of living organisms, they are in a position to construct an inductive argument exactly parallel to that of Antiochus. Where Antiochus maintains

²²⁷ See, e.g., SVF 3.10; Stob., *Ecl.* 2.77ff., 2.99, 2.112.

that the *telos* of every creature consists in pursuing and securing what is *oikeion* to its nature, the Stoics maintain that, on the contrary, an organism's *telos* is not so complicated as that. It consists simply in fulfilling the functions appropriate to its constitution through the pursuit of what is *oikeion*. Where Antiochus holds that the human good cannot be achieved without the presence of external resources, the Stoics hold that, on the contrary, the human good is not so haphazard and *ad hoc* an affair. It may be achieved regardless of external circumstances, just as the *telos* of non-rational animals is achieved when they perform the functions for which nature has suited them.²²⁸ In this way the Stoic analysis of the human good, embedded in the theory of *oikeiōsis*, is but one instance of a broader teleological account Chrysippus presumably set out in his lost works.

Finally, since this account of appropriate function is a wholly objective one, explained by objective features of a creature's constitution, it supposes a motivational mechanism that is sensitive to those objective features. In both the human and the animal case, this is provided by the *hēgemonikon*, which coordinates an organism's activity through the perception of what is *oikeion* or *allotriōn* to the constitution nature has given it. Yet the *telos* of the organism is not to be identified with securing what is *oikeion*, but only with the appropriate coordination of behavior through accurate perception. The Stoics advert to self-preserving behavior not because it is the only form of appropriate behavior observable in animals, but because it is form of behavior

²²⁸ See esp. Epictetus, *Diss.* 1.6: God has need of the animals in that they make use of external impressions, and of us in that we understand the use of external impressions. . . For of beings whose constitutions (*kataskeuai*) are different, the works (*ta erga*) and ends (*ta telē*) are likewise different. So for the being whose constitution is adapted to use only, mere use is sufficient, but where a being has also the faculty of understanding the use, unless the principle of propriety be added, he will never attain his end" (trans. Oldfather). Cf. also a passage from Stobaeus, qtd. in A. Long, 'Basis', 152: "every [non-human] animal lives consistently with its own natural constitution – and every plant indeed too according to the plants' so-called life, except that they do not make use of any calculation or counting or acts of selection that depend on testing things: plants live on the basis of bare nature, and [non-human] animals on the basis both of representations that draw them toward things appropriate and of urges that drive them away" (*Ecl.* 4.502, trans. Long).

that is both universal and complex enough to demonstrate the phenomenon of self-perception. Though it is one universal type of motivation, the Stoics do not appear to suppose that it is universally sufficient for the appropriate behavior by which an organism's *telos* is achieved.²²⁹ In the case of some animals, and of human beings in particular, the Stoics argue that both self-regarding and other-regarding impulses are present as a consequence of self-perception, and that both are appropriate to the animal's nature.

This interpretation supplies the Stoics with the sort of ethical foundation they need, namely, one which makes the end for each creature consist in the performance of those functions that are appropriate to it in virtue of the kind of creature it is. Such a model provides a more satisfactory account of the connection between *oikeiōsis* and the ethical notions it is supposed to support. It also helps to make sense of the Stoic commitment to eudaimonism. *Eudaimonia*, on this interpretation, will consist in carrying out the functions appropriate to one's nature on the basis of the stable epistemic condition in which virtue consists. The chapter to follow considers the Stoic doctrine of indifferents, the external resources and conditions that supply the considerations on which the judgment of what is appropriate to rational agents is based.

²²⁹ Thus Seneca, *Ep.* 121.24: "They could not survive except by desiring to do so. Nor would this desire alone have made them prosper, but without it nothing could have prospered . . . So you will see that creatures which are useless to others are alert for their own preservation" (trans. Gummere). I take it that this passage supports the view that the impulse towards self-preservation is prior in only a temporal sense, as Kerford ('Search') argues. That is, it is one type of appropriate response implied by an animal's perception of its own constitution. Though it is a *sine qua non* of other motivations (since it keeps the animal alive), it should not be regarded as the only basic form of motivation to which other impulses are subordinate or from which they are somehow derived.

CHAPTER 4

INDIFFERENTS

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter argued that the Stoic account of *oikeiōsis* supports a perfectionist theory according to which the human good consists in the development of essential human properties. On this view, the Stoics hold that human virtue consists wholly in the perfection of the rational *hêgemonikon*. This position raises an evident difficulty, however, for if the conditions of human happiness are made to depend solely on a cognitive state, independently of external circumstances, how are the Stoics to give content to their notion of virtue? If happiness is wholly insulated from life's contingencies in the way the Stoics claim, the Stoic agent may seem to lack any coherent reason to act at all.

The Stoic reply to this puzzle is the doctrine of preferred and dispreferred indifferents. Though the Stoics indeed maintain that external circumstances cannot disturb the happiness of the fully rational agent, they argue that one is nonetheless rationally required to pursue some outcomes rather than others. These outcomes are *indifferent*, in their view, but nonetheless *preferred*. Though the possession of health and wealth makes no contribution to human happiness, a failure to maintain one's health and wealth, all else being equal, constitutes a failure of rationality. A rejoinder along these lines is bound to sound like an illegitimate hedge, and the Stoic doctrine provokes criticism in ancient commentators and puzzlement in modern ones.²³⁰ The

²³⁰ 'Indifferents' translates the Greek *adiaphora*. Commentors have proposed various translations for the Greek terms *proêgmena* and *apoproêgmena*, which Cicero usually (though not always) renders as *praeposita* and *reiecta* (e.g., *Fin.* 3.15). I have used 'preferred' and 'dispreferred', which a majority of commentators now appear to favor. As for the puzzlement of modern commentators, Long, for instance, speaks of the "obscure and paradoxical relation between happiness and *ta kata phusin*, which resulted from the 'indifferent' status of the latter". See A. Long, 'Carneades and the Stoic Telos' ['Carneades'], *Phronesis*, 12 (1967), 59-90 at 89. Cf. also R. Barney, 'A Puzzle in Stoic Ethics' ['Puzzle'], *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 24 (2003), 303-340.

ancient criticism can be stated in the form of a dilemma: If the Stoics believe that agents are rationally required to pursue and preserve items like health and wealth, they should agree that health and wealth are goods and should include them in their account of human happiness. On the other hand, if they believe that health and wealth have value independently of happiness, they should concede that securing them constitutes some further end of rational action besides happiness itself.²³¹

Neither horn of this dilemma is compatible with the Stoic commitment to rational eudaimonism. Since the Stoics maintain that virtue is sufficient for achieving happiness, and since they deny that virtue depends on outcomes beyond an agent's control, they cannot treat preferred objects or circumstances either as part of or as a means to the human good. They must therefore reject the first horn, excluding preferred indifferents from their account of the end and denying that attaining them contributes in any way to virtue. Yet they must reject the second horn as well, for they agree with Aristotle that happiness is the ultimate end of rational desire and the only source of practical reasons. The Stoics therefore owe their ancient critics an explanation: they need to explain how items that make no contribution to happiness and virtue and are not themselves rational ends are nonetheless worthy of pursuit. Modern commentators have raised a related difficulty for the Stoic doctrine. Practical reason, they point out, aims essentially at a result that furthers some rational aim.²³² If

²³¹ According to Plutarch, "it was said by some in earlier times that Zeno was in the predicament of a man with wine gone sour, which he could sell neither as vinegar nor as wine, for there is no disposing of Zeno's 'promoted' either as good or as indifferent" (*Stoic. repugn.* 1047e, trans. Cherniss). Various versions of this dilemma appear in a number of sources, typically emphasizing one horn or the other. The main sources for this general line of attack on the Stoics are Plutarch (*Comm. not.* 1071a-1072f), Cicero (*Fin.* 4-5), and Alexander of Aphrodisias (*Mantissa* 159.15-168.21). The Academic Carneades is probably responsible for the dilemma itself, or at least for its most compelling formulation.

²³² See, for example, C. Taylor, 'Hellenistic Ethics' ['Ethics'], *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 5 (1987), 235-45 at 238-40: "[T]he Stoic conception of rationality is rationality in the choice of natural things; but rationality in choice cannot be identified otherwise than as choice of such a nature as is likely to lead to the best result. Choice is not rational in virtue of its form alone, but in virtue of its content, as being the kind of choice which may be expected best to promote the agent's ends . . . The Stoics hold that the only good is rationality, defined as rationality in the choice of natural things, but

health and wealth contribute nothing to happiness, and if happiness itself is the single end of rational action, how can the Stoics consistently claim that agents have reason to pursue these things? The Stoic commitment to rational eudaimonism seems to threaten their identification of virtue with happiness, for in order to give content to the notion of virtue, it seems that something other than virtue must itself be an object of rational concern.²³³ The Stoics appear to be caught between the mixed conception of happiness urged by their ancient critics, which makes room for external resources in an account of the human good, and the view that a virtuous agent has no reason to act at all.

These difficulties may appear insoluble, and commentators have ultimately settled for characterizations of the Stoic doctrine that do not clearly resolve them. Some conclude that the distinction between preferred and dispreferred indifferents must after all be explicable in terms of an instrumental contribution to virtue, and (apparently) that the Stoics do not mean what they say in denying this. Other commentators effectively embrace the second horn of the ancient dilemma, supposing that preferred indifferents indeed constitute objects of rational concern in their own right, and hence that the structure of Stoic ethics is substantially similar to Aristotelian eudaimonism. Still others characterize indifferents as possessing a kind of 'pursuit' or 'planning' value, but have little to say about the way in which value of this sort may be seen to fit with rational eudaimonism and with the Stoic orthodoxy that *eudaimonia* consists wholly in virtue.

I believe the Stoics have a defensible reply to their ancient and modern critics that is distinct from each of these interpretations. I shall argue that the value of

rationality thus conceived requires that the natural things chosen are independently good, and are chosen because they are good".

²³³ I owe the phrase "object of rational concern" to Terry Irwin's discussion of Stoicism in 'Conceptions', 205-244.

indifferents, of both the preferred and dispreferred variety, should not be understood in terms of practical reasons at all, as these are ordinarily conceived. Though it remains true that indifferents provide an agent with reasons that figure in the justification of action, this is not because achieving preferred outcomes and avoiding dispreferred ones constitutes a rational aim in its own right. Rather, preferred and dispreferred indifferents figure in the justification of rational assent, the cognitive state that motivates a rational agent, on the Stoic view. Indifferents, according to this suggestion, should be regarded as a source of epistemic rather than practical reasons. An object or circumstance will count as preferred just in case there is reason to believe that selecting it, whether for oneself or for others, accords with nature in any given instance. An object or circumstance will be dispreferred, on the other hand, just in case there is reason to believe that avoiding it so accords with nature.²³⁴

This way of conceiving indifferents differs importantly from interpretive attempts to understand the Stoic classification in terms of intrinsic or instrumental value. In particular, it allows us to see why the Stoics did not regard the prospective loss of preferred indifferents as something that could in any way undermine the rationality of virtue. On this account, the apparently mysterious way in which indifferents function in the rational deliberation of the Stoic agent is due to a basic difference between practical and epistemic reasons. Practical reasons, on the one hand, may present an agent with irresolvable conflicts whenever they derive from rational aims that cannot be jointly realized. Epistemic reasons, by contrast, do not enter into conflict in the same way. Because an agent's epistemic reasons are directed at the single end of true belief, any conflict among them is strictly *prima facie*,

²³⁴ These categories, in the Stoic view, are not arbitrarily discerned. They are evident in the fact that human agents have inborn non-rational impulses towards the former category of indifferents and non-rational impulses away from the latter.

resolved when the truth comes conclusively to light.²³⁵ Preferred and dispreferred indifferents provide the Stoic agent with epistemic reasons that support her deliberations about *orthos logos*, the rational organization of nature to which she seeks to conform. Yet since they are of use only insofar as they contribute to an understanding of nature's purpose, they are not themselves a source of practical reasons that could conflict, even in principle, with virtue's requirements. If this suggestion is correct, the value the Stoics associate with preferred and dispreferred indifferents can best be understood in epistemic terms.

Such a proposal may seem to invite at least two immediate objections. First, it might be thought to trade on a conflation of practical and epistemic notions of rational justification. Stoic texts clearly represent preferred indifferents as objects or states of affairs that one is justified, on the whole, in pursuing or promoting, and appeals to the value of indifferents play a basic role in the rational justification of an agent's actions, in the Stoic view. Yet ordinarily even the most compelling reason to believe a proposition does not by itself constitute a reason to act in one way rather than another. To treat the value of indifferents as epistemic, then, does not appear to explain the clear association of indifferents with the Stoic conception of *practical* rationality. This objection needs to be considered at greater length, but a preliminary reply is to point out, first, that the Stoic analysis of virtue is itself an epistemic one, second, that the Stoic analysis of motivation is a cognitive one, and third, that the Stoics treat actions themselves as a kind of cognitive performance.²³⁶ On the Stoic account an action is rationally justified just in case and insofar as it results from a rationally justified cognitive condition. To show that an agent has acted for good reasons is to

²³⁵ Here and throughout I set aside complications arising from epistemic value pluralism.

²³⁶ The only question being (apparently) whether actions can be performed with *nothing but* the *hégemonikon*. Cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 113.23: "Cleanthes and his pupil did not agree on what walking is. Cleanthes said it was breath extending from the commanding-faculty to the feet, Chrysippus that it was the commanding-faculty itself" (trans. Long and Sedley).

show that she has acted on the basis of true and reliable impressions. If practical justification depends in this way on epistemic justification, then to offer a rational defense of one's actions is *a fortiori* to offer a rational defense of one's cognitive states.²³⁷ Granted these assumptions, the Stoics can show that indifferents possess a value that justifies selecting or avoiding them by showing that they possess a value that justifies the cognitive state that moves an agent to select or avoid them.²³⁸

According to a second objection, if the categories of preferred and dispreferred are epistemic, or if indifferents play an important role in the justification of motivating beliefs, it seems we must concede that their value depends after all on an instrumental contribution to the cognitive state in which virtue consists. For *ex hypothesi*, indifferents will be instrumental in securing the cognitive condition the Stoics regard as good. But the Stoics deny that indifferents, whether preferred or dispreferred, can contribute in any way to the end of virtue and happiness. The suggestion that indifferents possess instrumental value might therefore appear to be a non-starter, one of many proposals inconsistent with the textual evidence. The reply to this objection is that, if we are comparing one set of indifferent circumstances with another, the Stoics indeed maintain that each is equally serviceable as far as virtue and happiness are concerned. They emphatically do not hold that the *difference* between preferred and dispreferred indifferents is to be explained by the suggestion that the former contribute more to virtue than the latter. From the Stoic point of view, preferred objects or outcomes are of no more use to a sage than dispreferred ones.

On the other hand, if we ask whether indifferent objects and circumstances *in general* are a means to virtue, the Stoic reply is surely yes. But here we are merely employing the mundane sense of 'means' in which it is true to say that a blank canvas

²³⁷ More precisely: on the Stoic account, for some non-trivial set of propositions a sufficient reason to believe P provides an agent with overriding practical reason to perform an action A.

²³⁸ Stob., *Ecl.* 2.85-86

and a set of oils were once a means to the *Mona Lisa*. The Stoics do not mean to suggest that a virtuous agent can do without the class of indifferents as a whole, anymore than an artist can do without a canvas and paint. Virtue, the Stoics say, must have some material to work with, and in this sense indifferents are *sine quibus non* of virtuous activity.²³⁹ What the Stoics deny, strictly speaking, is that preferred objects and circumstances can be distinguished from dispreferred ones on the basis of an instrumental contribution to some rational end, and this is consistent with the claim that both preferred and dispreferred indifferents are a source of epistemic reasons by which an agent grasps the content of virtue.²⁴⁰ Although I concede, then, that there is a respect in which the class of indifferent things as a whole contributes to the Stoic agent's conception of the good, and hence to securing her happiness, I do not propose to explain the value of *preferred* as opposed to *dispreferred* indifferents in terms of this contribution. Neither class of indifferents is more useful as a means to virtue than the other, and here my interpretation is importantly distinct from other attempts to explain the value of indifferents in instrumental terms.

The present chapter aims to defend this account of the Stoic position and to clarify some of its details. My argument in what follows is largely, though not wholly, an argument from elimination. Surviving characterizations of the role of indifferents are for the most part negative, so that it is easier to show what the role of indifferents in Stoic theory is not rather than to provide a detailed positive account of the doctrine. In what follows I first set out some of the evidence for the Stoic view and examine its claims in greater detail. I then consider three interpretations that have been defended, or least implied, by contemporary commentators. I argue that in each case the

²³⁹ But so too is the existence of the cosmos and even of the virtuous agent herself. Cf. G. Striker, 'Antipater', 302n8: "the Stoics, on the contrary, believed them [indifferents] to have only the status of necessary conditions (*hōn ouk aneu*), as do heaven and earth, space and time".

²⁴⁰ Contra Lesses, who (as I explain below) attempts to explain the positive value of *preferred indifferents* in particular by appealing to an instrumental conception of value.

proposed interpretation is either incompatible with the surviving textual evidence or inconsistent with other fundamental Stoic commitments. I conclude by defending in greater detail the account I have outlined above. If we attend carefully to other elements of Stoic theory, and to the Stoics' cognitive account of motivation in particular, it should be possible to say something about the way in which Chrysippus understood the claim that preferred indifferents, though no part of the human good, are nonetheless pursued by rational agents.

4.2 The doctrine of preferred indifferents

Orthodox Stoicism is committed to two claims: (1) that virtue alone is good and (2) that some things that are not good are nevertheless in accordance with nature and preferred. Both claims remain at the core of Stoic theory throughout most of its history, and they are at least partly intelligible as a development of two Socratic principles: that virtue is sufficient for happiness and that virtue is a craft consisting in a type of expert knowledge.²⁴¹ If virtue is the only thing required for happiness, this explains the respect in which other items are indifferent. But if virtue is a craft, it must nevertheless have some material with which to work or some product it aims to produce.²⁴² This helps to explain why some indifferents must be regarded as preferred.

²⁴¹ For the former claim, see DL 7.127 (SVF 1.187), *Tusc.* 2.29 (SVF 185). For the latter, see *SE Adv. math.* 7.227 (SVF 2.56), M.11.110-11. Cf. SVF 1.73, 2.94, 3.516. For discussion of both claims, see G. Striker, 'Plato's Socrates and the Stoics', in *Essays on Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics* (Cambridge, 1996), 316-324; A. Long, 'Socrates in Hellenistic Philosophy', *Classical Quarterly* 38 (1988), 150-71. The later Stoics Panaetius and Posidonius may have somehow tried to soften the Stoic commitment to the first claim, but the evidence for this is inconclusive. See DL 7.103 and *Fin.* 4.23, but cf. *Tusc.* 2.61-62. Kidd doubts that Panaetius or Posidonius made any changes of consequence. See I. Kidd, 'The Relation of Stoic Intermediates to the *Summum Bonum*, with Reference to Change in the Stoa', *The Classical Quarterly*, 5 (1955), 181-94. The early heterodox Stoic Aristo is said to have tampered with the claim that some indifferents are preferred, but Chrysippus took considerable pains to refute this view. Cf. *SE Adv. math.* 11.64 ff. (SVF 1.361), DL 7.160 (SVF 1.351), Cicero *Fin.* 3.50 (SVF 1.365).

²⁴² Cf. Plato, *Chrm.* 165e-166a.

For the exercise of virtue to have a point, it must be possible to make some discriminations of value beyond the value attributed to virtue itself.

The general import of the Stoic doctrine is therefore Socratic.²⁴³ But the Stoics also claim, while Socrates does not, that the human good may be described as living according to nature.²⁴⁴ By this they mean, as I have argued, that the content of the human good is constrained both by a correct account of human nature and by an understanding of one's place in the rationally organized cosmos as a whole. This thesis is importantly connected to the doctrine of indifferents, for the Stoics characterize preferred indifferents as those objects or states of affairs that accord with nature (*kata phusin/secundum naturam*) and dispreferred indifferents as those that do not. The Stoics regard the preferred status of some indifferent things as a product of nature's design: they say that indifferents that accord with nature tend to stimulate *hormai*, the appetitive psychological impulses that follow on assent to an impression that something is or is not appropriate to pursue.²⁴⁵ Within the class of indifferents, then, those objects that naturally attract or repel us are preferred and dispreferred, respectively, while those that do neither comprise a third category of thoroughly indifferent things. Health and wealth are standard Stoic examples of the preferred. Sickness and poverty, on the other hand, are dispreferred. Plucking a twig or a leaf is thoroughly indifferent.²⁴⁶

This classification of indifferents figures importantly in a further topic of central importance to Stoic ethical theory, the notion of appropriate actions or duties

²⁴³ Plutarch, *Comm. not.* 1048c, 1068a; Cicero, *Tusc.* 5.34.45. Cf. Plato *Euth.* 279a-281e, *Meno* 88a-d, *Gorg.* 467e-468d.

²⁴⁴ DL 7.87-9, *Fin.* 3.31. Difficulties created by this and other Stoic identity claims are discussed in Striker, 'Antipater', 298-315.

²⁴⁵ Though for reasons I explain below, I would object to the suggestion that this property of preferred indifferents gives agents any practical reason to select or reject them. Cf. Stob., *Ecl.* 2.80.22 (SVF 3.136).

²⁴⁶ Stob. *Ecl.* 2.79

(*ta kathêkonta/officia*). All appropriate action is rational action, in the Stoic view, since the Stoics argue that an appropriate action is one for which a reasonable (*eulogon/probabile*) defense can be given.²⁴⁷ Virtuous action, in turn, is appropriate action done in the way that a fully rational agent would do it, on the basis of a true and stable set of beliefs about the good. It is clear, moreover, that a reasonable defense of appropriate action will refer to the value and disvalue of indifferents, for the Stoics say that indifferents are the subject matter (*hulê*) of virtue, meaning that they are in some sense the *material* with which the virtuous agent must work. Yet the Stoics also describe them as the principle (*archê*) of appropriate actions.²⁴⁸ These claims suggest that the categories of preferred and dispreferred play a basic role in the Stoic characterization of rational agency. They figure fundamentally in the deliberations of the rational agent who seeks to conform to nature and in the account she would give, if pressed, of her actions.²⁴⁹

Later taxonomies of preferred indifferents draw a number of further, often bewildering, distinctions.²⁵⁰ Some preferred indifferents are internal (some psychological tendencies are preferable to others, for instance), while others are external. Some are preferred as instrumental or productive means to other preferred

²⁴⁷ Stob. *Ecl.* 2.85-86

²⁴⁸ SVF 3.114, 3.763, 3.766. Chrysippus is said to have argued in his response to Aristo that eliminating the distinction between preferred and dispreferred deprives virtue of its content: "'What then', says [Chrysippus], 'will be my point of departure and what shall I take as duty's principle and virtue's matter, once I have abandoned nature and conformity to nature' (*Comm. not.* 1069e, trans. Cherniss)? Cf. *Comm. not.* 1071b: "[F]or the prudent selection and acceptance of those things is the goal, whereas the things themselves and the obtaining of them are not the goal but are given as a kind of matter having selective value" (trans. Cherniss).

²⁴⁹ Though this relation, it appears, is far from straightforward. As I understand the Stoic view, all appropriate and virtuous action can be described as selections and rejections of various indifferents. On the other hand, the value and disvalue the Stoics assign to different categories of indifferents are not the only deliberative considerations. The Stoic sage will sometime select dispreferred indifferents over preferred indifferents. For recent discussion of Stoic deliberation, see J. Cooper, 'Greek Philosophers on Euthanasia and Suicide', in J. Cooper, *Reason and Emotion* (Princeton, 1999), 515-41; R. Barney, 'Puzzle'; T. Brennan, *The Stoic Life* (Oxford, 2005), Chapters 11-13.

²⁵⁰ For a helpful overview that draws useful distinctions, see A. Bonhöffer (trans. W.O. Stephens), *The Ethics of the Stoic Epictetus* ['*Ethics*'] (New York, 1996), 217-38.

indifferents, some are preferred for their final value, and some for both. The Stoics say that objects are preferred when they possess a certain positive degree of *axia*, or value, and the later Stoic Antipater is said to have introduced the term *axia eklektikê*, or *selective value*, to further characterize the preferred.²⁵¹ Finally, the Stoics underscore the difference between the goodness of virtue and the selective value of preferred indifferents with a terminological distinction they are careful to observe. What is preferred is to be selected (*lêpton/selegendum*), but only the good, understood as virtue, is to be chosen (*haireton/expetendum*).

Ancient critics attack the Stoic position from both sides, sometimes challenging the claim that only virtue is good, sometimes the claim that preferred indifferents nonetheless have value. These criticisms come to a head in the attacks of the Academic Carneades, the second-century contemporary of Diogenes and Antipater. Reports of Carneades' attack on the Stoic account of the end survive in Cicero's philosophical writings and in accounts of the dilemma I have already mentioned, which is reported both by Plutarch and the later peripatetic commentator Alexander of Aphrodisias.²⁵² Carneades argues that every skill, and virtue in particular, must be directed towards an end that is distinct from the skill itself. Since the Stoics claim that virtue is a skill, they ought to concede either that preferred indifferents are to be included together with virtue in a mixed account of the end, or they must treat the possession of indifferents as some further end of rational action. If preferred indifferents are worth seeking even though they contribute nothing to virtue and happiness, the Stoics must regard them as a second end the skill of virtue tries to attain.²⁵³ Antiochus and Alexander later appropriate Carneades' argument to defend an

²⁵¹ No doubt in response to the attacks of Carneades, who argues that preferred indifferents have intrinsic value for the sake of which virtue selects them.

²⁵² Cicero also alludes to the dilemma at *Fin.* 3.22.

²⁵³ Plutarch's brief against the Stoics argues that the Stoics commit themselves either to a reference point that is external to the end or to two ends (*Comm. not.* 1071f-1072d). Cicero reports that, as part of

Aristotelian account of the human good, one that accommodates both virtue and external resources like health and wealth.

Little evidence survives to show exactly how the Stoics responded to these criticisms, but later accounts of Stoic ethics preserve a number of similes on which the Stoics rely to clarify and explain their claims about indifferents.²⁵⁴ Some of these analogies suggest the way in which the Stoics attempt to distinguish their account of virtue from Carneades' account of skills. I shall argue that they also help to explain the category of value the Stoic account assumes and illuminate some of the broader motivations behind the doctrine, but it may be useful first to consider some difficulties that arise for alternative interpretations of the Stoic view. In the next section, I consider and criticize three ways in which commentators have attempted to make sense of the positive value of preferred indifferents and of their relation to virtue and the good.

4.3 Preferred indifferents as commensurate with the good

One way for preferred indifferents to have value is in the way that goodness has value. That is to say, we might try to understand the distinction the Stoics draw between the value of goodness and the value of preferred indifferents as one of degree, not kind. Commentators have occasionally suggested this view (though they have not developed it at length), and some of the examples the Stoics employ seem to suggest it.²⁵⁵ For instance, in explaining the Stoic position Cicero writes,

his polemic against the Stoics, Carneades defended an account according to which the human good consists in *achieving* indifferents (*Acad.* 2.131). Alexander appears to report a version of the same Carneadean argument at *Mantissa* 161.4ff.

²⁵⁴ E.g., Cicero, *Fin.* 3.24, 3.45, 3.52; Stob. *Ecl.*, 2.85; Epictetus, *Diss.* 2.2.15, 2.4.3; Seneca, *Ben.* 2.17

²⁵⁵ Annas seem to recognize this possibility when she suggests that, "virtue is not straightforwardly incommensurate with other things, in the sense of not being on the same scale at all". See J. Annas, 'Ancient Ethics and Modern Morality' ['Ancient Ethics'], *Philosophical Perspectives*, 6 (1992), 119-136 at 122. On the other hand, Annas elsewhere says they *are* incommensurate: "What is chosen is not, strictly, preferred over what is selected, since they manifest different kinds of value; they are not on the same scale for deliberation to be able to prefer one over the other." See J. Annas, 'Aristotle and Kant on

[The value of material advantages] is like the light of a lamp eclipsed and obliterated by the rays of the sun; like a drop of honey lost in the vastness of the Aegean sea; a penny added to the wealth of Croesus, or a single step on the road from here to India. Such is the value of bodily goods that it is unavoidably eclipsed, overwhelmed and destroyed by the splendor and grandeur of virtue as the Stoic candidate for the highest good.²⁵⁶

These similes imply that, although the weight of preferred indifferents is vanishingly small in comparison with virtue, virtue and indifferents are nevertheless to be weighed on the same scale. Eclipsed though it may be by the sun, the light of a lamp is nevertheless light, and a step on the way to India is undeniably part of the journey to India.

These Stoic comparisons seem to support the view that although the value of preferred indifferents is slight, preferred indifferents are indeed goods. We might wonder, then, whether the Stoics mean only to emphasize the comparative indifference of health and wealth with respect to the worth of virtue, but not to claim that they are altogether indifferent. There are at least two ways in which such an account might be understood. It might be that preferred indifferents are unconditionally good, that is, that health and wealth have at least some value whether or not they are conjoined with virtue. On this interpretation both virtuous and vicious agents stand to benefit to at least some degree from external resources, since a virtuous use of these resources is not a condition of their benefiting an agent. Alternatively, the Stoics might argue that health and wealth are goods only when conjoined with virtue. On this interpretation, the Stoics would share a view sometimes attributed to Socrates, that although virtue

Morality and Practical Reasoning', in S. Engstrom and J. Whiting (eds.), *Aristotle, Kant and the Stoics* (Cambridge, 1996), 237-57 at 241. Frede writes that the sage's failure to attain the indifferents he pursues will be "a very minor loss, since the value of what he failed to obtain does not even begin to shift the balance if compared in weightiness to the rationality he maintained in being impelled towards the object he failed to obtain". See M. Frede, 'The Stoic Doctrine of Affections of the Soul', in M. Schofield and G. Striker (eds.), *The Norms of Nature* (Cambridge, 1986), 93-110 at 110.

²⁵⁶ *Fin.* 3.45, Woolf's translation. Cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 92.5 for similar language.

alone suffices for happiness, virtue and external goods together bring about a greater degree of happiness, however slight.²⁵⁷ That is to say, the virtuous man is happy, but the virtuous rich man is *happier*, if only because his wealth secures a greater scope for virtue. On either of these accounts, virtue may remain the single most important part of happiness, but the former account concedes, while the latter denies, that health and wealth are unconditionally good for an agent.

But these comparisons cannot be accepted at face value, and they must be understood as pedagogical rather than precise, for Cicero elsewhere rules out any distinction of degree in explicit terms: "Value (the Greek *axia*) is not counted amongst goods nor amongst evils, so it will remain in its own category, however much you add to it. Hence the particular value of virtue is distinct: a matter of kind, not degree".²⁵⁸ This point, elsewhere attested as the Stoic position, explicitly rules out the first possibility, according to which the value of preferred indifferents is unconditional and straightforwardly commensurable with that of virtue. Yet the claim that health and wealth are goods only when conjoined with virtue also cannot be the Stoic view.²⁵⁹ For on this account no less than on the former, the goodness of virtue and happiness are aggregative, and the goodness of virtue when conjoined with health and wealth will outweigh the goodness of virtue alone. This result is also inconsistent with the Stoic position, for though the Stoics concede that health and wealth may be used well in conjunction with virtue, they deny that virtue admits of degrees. If virtue is also

²⁵⁷ See G. Vlastos, 'Happiness', 214-24.

²⁵⁸ *Fin.* 3.34-35: *Nam cum aestimatio, quae axia dicitur, neque in bonis numerata sit nec rursus in malis, quantumcumque eo addideris, in suo genere manebit. Alia est igitur propria aestimatio virtutis, quae genere, non crescendo valet.* Cf. *Fin.* 3.43-44, 47; *Tusc.* 5.34, 45-6; Seneca, *Ep.* 87.15, 118.12-13, 35; Plutarch, *Stoic. repugn.* 1048c, 1068a. As reported by Cicero, Antiochus pits the view that the value of external goods is commensurable with that of virtue *against* the Stoic position and appeals to the same Stoic analogies to do so (*Fin.* 4.29). That they are in fact Stoic analogies seems to be confirmed by Seneca, *Ep.* 92.5.

²⁵⁹ DL 7.102-3: "For as the property of hot is to warm, not to cool, so the property of good is to benefit, not to injure; but wealth and health do no more benefit than injury, therefore neither wealth nor health is good. Further, they say that that is not good of which both good and bad use can be made; therefore wealth and health are not goods" (trans. Hicks). Cf. SE M.11.91.

identical with happiness and the good, then happiness and the good must themselves be non-aggregative.²⁶⁰ These further Stoic commitments make it clear that the value of preferred indifferents cannot be added to the value of virtue.²⁶¹ A difference of degree is not the distinction the Stoics have in mind.

4.4 Preferred indifferents as an instrumental means to virtue

A second way in which preferred indifferents might be of value is as a means to virtue. Glenn Lesses argues that the Stoics regard preferred indifferents in particular as "a causal means to what is good". Lesses bases his interpretation largely on two passages from Diogenes Laertius and Cicero. On the basis of these texts, he argues that the value the Stoics attribute to health and wealth is a "fundamentally causal notion".²⁶² According to this account, the Stoics regard preferred indifferents as a "[causal] instrumental means to the constituents of the life in accordance with nature".²⁶³ Lesses appeals to the following passages to support this claim:²⁶⁴

(1) They [sc. the Stoics] say that one sort of value [is] a contribution (*sumblêsin*) to the consistent life, which is [the case] concerning every good; another is a power (*dunamin*) which contributes as intermediary (*mesên*) to the life in accordance with nature, as much as to say whatever [value] health or wealth bring forward to the life in accordance with nature.²⁶⁵

(2) They say that *aestimabile* [the valuable] (for thus, I think, we should translate it) is that which is either itself in accordance with nature or produces

²⁶⁰ DL 7.127. Cf. G. Vlastos, 'Happiness', 208n37, 217n65. The claim that virtue does not admit of degrees is rooted in the Stoics' cognitive account of virtue as a system of true and stable beliefs about the good.

²⁶¹ The long list of predicates the Stoics attribute to virtue but deny to what is preferred also confirms this view. See, e.g., SVF 1.557, *Tusc.* 5.43.

²⁶² Lesses, 106.

²⁶³ Lesses, 106.

²⁶⁴ This is the primary textual evidence on which Lesses relies. He also refers to Stob., *Ecl.* 2.83, but the classification of value given in that passage does not fit well with the classification he favors. Lesses notes this but does not say whether he takes this fact to count against his causal-instrumental interpretation.

²⁶⁵ DL 7.105, qtd. in Lesses, 'Virtue' at 106 (trans. Lesses).

something that is of this kind--so that it is worthy of choice on account of the fact that it has some weight worthy of *aestimatio*, which they call *axia*. On the other hand the *inaestimabile* is that which is contrary to the above.²⁶⁶

The first of these passages occurs in a taxonomy of indifferents preserved by Diogenes Laertius. The second belongs to a passage in which Cicero describes the way in which the notion of goodness is first acquired, according to the Stoics. Unfortunately, neither passage supports the conclusion Lesses wishes to draw.

Lesses's use of the first passage is too hasty. Although Diogenes does say that the value of preferred indifferents depends on a kind of intermediate *dunamis* (which Lesses translates as 'power'), the Greek term is certainly not restricted to a causal or instrumental notion. In this context it is perhaps better translated merely as 'property' or 'quality', for immediately before the passage Lesses cites, Diogenes says that the term 'indifferent' (*adiaphora*) applies to things like health and wealth, which make no contribution (*ouk sunergounta*) to happiness or misery, and nearly identical claims are found in Stobaeus, Sextus, Plutarch, Alexander and Cicero.²⁶⁷ Since Lesses acknowledges that the Stoics regard happiness as "living consistently with nature", he needs to explain why evidence that preferred indifferents contribute nothing to happiness does not count against his claim that they contribute instrumentally to living in accordance with nature. But he does not discuss these passages or explain why they do not conflict with his view.²⁶⁸ Since there is no need to construe the use of *dunamis* instrumentally, and since doing so conflicts with a good deal of evidence to the contrary, Lesses's appeal to this passage is unconvincing.

Lesses's use of (2) is similarly problematic. He suggests that this passage "clarifies the discussion of value [found in Diogenes]" and "confirms the distinction between the value ascribed to whatever is intrinsically worthwhile, viz. goods, and the

²⁶⁶ *Fin.* 3.20, qtd. in Lesses, 'Virtue' at 108 (trans. Lesses).

²⁶⁷ E.g., Stob. *Ecl.* 2.85, Sextus *Adv. math.* 11.59. Cf. SVF 1.145, 3.122.

²⁶⁸ Lesses 'Virtue', 105 and 115n46.

value ascribed to whatever is an intermediate contributor to the consistent life, viz. preferred indifferents".²⁶⁹ This construal rests on a misunderstanding, however, because in this passage Cicero is not drawing a distinction between the instrumental value of preferred indifferents and the final value of the goods they produce, but a distinction between instrumental and final categories of value *within* the class of preferred indifferents. At least two considerations confirm this. First, the Latin *Lesses* translates as "worthy of choice", *selectione dignum*, ought rather to be translated as "worthy of selection", since as I have noted, the Stoics observe a terminological distinction between what is to be chosen (*haireteon/expetendum*) and what is to be selected (*lêpteon/selegendum*), and Cicero is careful to conform to this usage throughout the *De finibus*.²⁷⁰ The terminology of this passage makes it clear that Cicero is not suggesting that preferred indifferents as a class are a means to realizing the good, but only that the some preferred indifferents (like wealth) are valuable as a means to other preferred indifferents (like health). Both Diogenes Laertius and Stobaeus record the same distinction between productive and final categories of value *within* the class of preferred indifferents, and Cicero himself draws it at *De finibus* 3.56.

Contrary to what *Lesses*'s account supposes, then, Cicero's discussion of indifferents in the *De finibus* sets out a basic division between the good, which is to be praised and chosen for its own sake (*per se laudandum et expetendum*), and the preferred, which may be selected either for its final value (*sumendum propter se*), or for the sake of its utility (*sumendum propter eius usum*). *Lesses*'s interpretation conflates these distinctions, treating the difference between preferred indifferents with final value and those with instrumental value as the distinction between the preferred

²⁶⁹ *Lesses*, 'Virtue', 108.

²⁷⁰ Other sources occasionally confuse the Stoic terms, but in *De finibus* Cicero does not. As he says explicitly at 3.22: what is indifferent is *seligendum, non expetendum*.

and the good.²⁷¹ It would be unfortunate if the Stoics drew a distinction between instrumental and final categories of value within the class of things to be selected as preferred, while also relying on the same distinction to distinguish what is preferred from what is good. Since the Stoics distinguish instrumental and final value within the category of preferred indifferents, they should not appeal to the same distinction to distinguish that category as a whole.

The suggestion that the value of preferred indifferents depends on an instrumental contribution to virtue and happiness appears plausible only if one considers some Stoic texts in isolation from others. Since the Stoics do acknowledge that indifferents are the material with which virtue works, the possibility of selecting some indifferents rather than others is a *sine qua non* of the virtuous life. But in this minimal sense being alive is also a condition of virtuous action, as is the existence of the cosmos itself. That virtuous action always involves a selection among whatever indifferents are available does not show that preferred indifferents in particular are an instrumental means to virtue, as that relation is ordinarily understood, nor that some configurations of indifferents contribute more to living virtuously than others.²⁷² If the Stoics concede that health and wealth contribute causally to virtue and the life according to nature, they have some reason to favor a mixed account of happiness and the end, but surviving Stoic texts reject this possibility.

²⁷¹ Rackham's Loeb translation, which here and elsewhere understands *referre* as 'to be a means to', has perhaps encouraged this confusion. Thus Rackham describes the good as "the End to which all else is a means" (239). Woolf correctly translates "to which everything else ought to be directed", since *y* can be directed or referred to *x* without being a means to *x*. Cf. *Tusc.* 5.48: *Refert autem omnia ad beate vivendum; beata igitur vita laudabilis.*

²⁷² The Stoics hold that a virtuous selection of indifferents is possible in even the worse circumstances when no selections among preferred indifferents are available.

4.5 Preferred indifferents as intrinsically valuable

I have so far argued that the value the Stoics attribute to preferred indifferents is incommensurable with the value of goodness, and also that it does not depend on any instrumental contribution to virtue. Interpretations to the contrary are incompatible with a careful reading of the available evidence, and few commentators have defended them at length. I want now to consider the suggestion that preferred indifferents have value in their own right, independently of virtue and the good. A number of commentators appear to favor this view; for though they characterize the role of indifferents variously, they appear to agree that the value of preferred indifferents is rooted in their nature.²⁷³ On such an account, this value is plausibly understood as unconditional and non-derivative, since it does not depend on any relation to or conjunction with virtue. On ordinary understandings of the distinction between 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' value, this amounts to the view that the Stoics posit two intrinsic but incommensurable kinds of value: the value that belongs to virtue alone and the positive, independent value of preferred indifferents.²⁷⁴

²⁷³ Long and Sedley suggest that there are "intrinsic differences of value" between indifferents that accord with nature and those contrary to nature. They variously characterize the value of preferred indifferents as "objective", "a feature of the world", "conditional upon circumstances", residing in the "natural preferability of health to sickness", and based on "intrinsic preferability". See A. Long and D. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* [*Hellenistic*] (Cambridge, 1987), 357-59. Irwin ('Conceptions') defends the view that preferred indifferents are valuable in their own right as "objects of rational concern". My interpretation follows that of Frede, who regards the value of preferred indifferents as "entirely derivative" but blurs the relevant distinctions somewhat by also calling preferred indifferents means to the good. See M. Frede, 'Good', 71-94. Cf. also A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy* (Berkeley, 1986), 71-94; I. Kidd, 'Intermediates and the End for Man', in A. Long (ed.), *Problems in Stoicism* (London, 1971), 150-72; J. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1977), 11-14; F. Sandbach, *The Stoics* (New York, 1975), 28-9; B. Inwood, *Ethics*, 198 and 208-10. According to Nicholas Wolterstorff, some indifferents "must have intrinsic value if the Stoic way of thinking of virtue is not to be fundamentally incoherent". See N. Wolterstorff, *Justice* (Princeton, 2008), 163n26. As Wolterstorff notes, Annas sometimes says that indifferents do not have intrinsic value. See, e.g., J. Annas, *Platonic Ethics, Old and New* (Cornell, 1999), 42.

²⁷⁴ In speaking of intrinsic and extrinsic value, I intend the distinction articulated by, e.g., Christine Korsgaard ['Two Distinctions in Goodness', *The Philosophical Review*, 92 (1983), 169-95] and more recently by Rae Langton ['Objective and Unconditioned Value', *The Philosophical Review*, 116 (2007), 157-185]. Extrinsic value, on this account, is "the value a thing has from another source" (Langton, 160). This is a broader category than that of instrumentally valuable things. It might include artifacts, symbols, or tokens, for example (Langton suggests that a wedding ring is valued for the sake of one's

This suggestion also seems to mischaracterize the Stoic position for at least two reasons. First, on ordinary views of intrinsic value, to ascribe intrinsic value to an object or state affairs is to hold that there is at least some reason to pursue or promote it.²⁷⁵ Since the Stoics regard *eudaimonia* as the only source of reasons for acting, and since they identify *eudaimonia* with virtue, they cannot, consistently with rational eudaimonism, attribute to objects other than virtue itself a kind of value that supplies a rational agent with normative *practical reasons* that regulate her desires and actions.²⁷⁶ The suggestion that preferred indifferents have intrinsic value does not show how the Stoic doctrine can escape the objections of its critics, for once it is conceded that health and wealth have value in their own right, it becomes difficult to see why, in view of the Stoic commitment to rational eudaimonism, these items should not be included in an account of happiness.

More fundamentally, however, the attribution of intrinsic value to preferred indifferents appears to be at odds with a basic motivation that underlies the Stoic identification of happiness with virtue. In treating health and wealth as proper parts of happiness and rational ends in their own right, a eudaimonist theory such as Aristotle's acknowledges the possibility of rational conflict between virtue and other goods. On

spouse, but not as an instrument to any further end). If this distinction is accepted, an object may have derivative but non-instrumental value, or it may have value as an instrumental means to something whose value is derivative but non-instrumental. This is an important point, because the Stoics draw a distinction between instrumental and final value *within* the category of preferred indifferents. Some preferred indifferents are valuable only as means to others, but none of them is valuable independently of virtue. Derivative or extrinsic value in this sense should not be identified with supervenient value; both intrinsic and extrinsic forms of value are plausibly understood to supervene on nonevaluative properties.

²⁷⁵ Thus Scanlon writes, “to claim that something is *valuable* (or that it is “of value”) is to claim that others also have reason to value it, as you do”. See T. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge MA, 1998), 95. For further discussion of the relation between intrinsic value and normative reasons see, e.g., R. Audi, ‘Intrinsic Value and Reasons for Action’, *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 41, supplementary vol., 2003, 30-56; R. Crisp, ‘Value, Reasons, and the Structure of Justification’, *Analysis*, 65 (2005), 80-85. S. Darwall, ‘Moore, Normativity and Intrinsic Value’, *Ethics*, 113 (2003), 468-89.

²⁷⁶ The Stoics appear to accept a completeness condition on happiness, though it is not perfectly clear what this amounts to. See for example Stob. *Ecl.* 2.100.7 (SVF 3.589). Alexander's criticisms of the Stoic view at *Mantissa* 20.16 also seem to assume that the Stoics accept such a condition.

this account, in so far as it is rational to pursue happiness an agent will have some reason to be virtuous and some reason to pursue external goods, and the latter sort of reason will not depend on the former.²⁷⁷ Accordingly, if an opportunity to acquire external goods in a manner contrary to virtue arises, these practical reasons may come into conflict. The prospect of conflict between virtue and external goods need not undermine a rational defense of virtue provided that it can be shown that the reasons virtue provides will always outweigh the reasons external goods give us. The Stoics, however, do not appear to regard this as a tenable position, as Irwin plausibly suggests. On the contrary, they appear to suppose that so long as health and wealth are accorded at least some rational weight as ends in their own right, we can construct plausible cases in which their value will outweigh the considerations favoring virtue.²⁷⁸ In denying that health and wealth belong to happiness, then, the Stoics wish to argue not that virtuous action is always the most rational course of action, all things considered, but that rival considerations have no weight whatsoever.²⁷⁹

If this motivation indeed supports the Stoic identification of virtue and happiness, it can be of no use to the Stoics to argue that although happiness consists in virtue alone, we nonetheless have independent reason to pursue preferred indifferents in virtue of their intrinsic value. For if the Stoic conception of the end differs from a mixed conception of happiness only by excluding some ultimate rational objectives from an account of happiness, then although the Stoic view indeed eliminates the

²⁷⁷ Though this might not be the case on the sort of account defended by Cooper in 'Aristotle and the Goods of Fortune', *The Philosophical Review*, 94 (1985), 173-96.

²⁷⁸ See T. Irwin, 'Conceptions', 213: "The Stoics believe that Aristotle cannot consistently maintain both that happiness is a mixture and that virtue is its dominant component". The point is confirmed by any number of Stoic sources, e.g., Plutarch *Comm. not.* 1070d, *Stoic rep.* 1038d, 1040d; Cicero, *Fin.* 5.22, *Off.* 3.18, 3.20, 3.35; Seneca, *Vit. beat.* 14.1-2, 15.1-7.

²⁷⁹ Plato and Aristotle are arguably committed to the view that virtue is always the most rational course of action. The Stoics, as I understand them, accept the stronger claim that virtue simply cancels or "silences" rival considerations, or (more strictly) the claim that there *are* no rival considerations. For the distinction between "overriding" and "silencing" reasons, see J. McDowell, 'The Role of *Eudaimonia* in Aristotle's Ethics', in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, (Berkeley, 1980), 359-76 at 369-70.

possibility of conflict *within* happiness, it does not help to eliminate the rational threat to virtue at all.²⁸⁰ It merely extends the scope of rational action beyond the scope of happiness and ensures that the requirements of eudaimonist reasons will only conflict with the requirements of non-eudaimonist ones. This sort of adjustment might be understood as a kind of conceptual reinforcement of the dominance of virtue: it would allow us to range the considerations having to do with virtue and happiness, on the one hand, against those having to do with external resources that do not matter for happiness, on the other. But such a view does not hold out any clear advantage over a mixed account of the human *telos*. It does not eliminate rational conflict between virtue and other objects, but merely relocates it by redrawing the boundaries of happiness. Indeed, it may seem to sacrifice a plausible account of happiness for an implausible account of rational conflict.

In order to ensure that other rational ends do not undermine the supremacy of virtue, then, the Stoics need at least to show that the reasons we have to be virtuous and the reasons we have for pursuing things like health and wealth infallibly coincide. But this raises a question of explanatory priority to which there are three possible answers. If an agent never has any reason to pursue external goods contrary to virtue, this might be (1) because her reasons for being virtuous depend on her reasons for acquiring external goods, or (2) because her reasons for acquiring external goods depend on her reasons for being virtuous, or (3) because there are two independent sources of practical reasons whose prescriptions always coincide and which therefore reinforce one another. The Stoics claim that virtue is an intrinsic good and the sole component of happiness, thereby ruling out (1). If preferred indifferents have value in

²⁸⁰ It would not, in fact, appear to differ at all from some conceptions of, e.g., Aristotle's theory, such as that defended by Kraut.

their own right, however, it must be that there is at least some reason to acquire them independently of considerations having to do with virtue, ruling out (2).

It is difficult to see how the Stoics could defend (3).²⁸¹ If preferred indifferents have value in their own right, they must constitute an independent source of practical considerations a rational agent must weigh in her deliberations. The Stoics might try to argue that the course of action recommended by concern for virtue infallibly coincides with the course of action recommended by an independent concern for preferred indifferents.²⁸² Yet it is quite unclear what sort of deliberative principle could ensure such a coincidence. Though the principles of virtue might ensure that an agent always has *most* reason to distribute preferred indifferents in the way that nature recommends, they could hardly ensure that an agent has *no* reason to distribute them otherwise. If we ascribe intrinsic value to health, the virtuous agent who sacrifices her health for the sake of her city will presumably act contrary to some independent reason she has for preserving her health. For her health, after all, is an intrinsically valuable thing. Unless the Stoic agent's rational concern for preferred indifferents depends wholly on her rational concern for virtue, there will plausibly be cases in which these distinct forms of rational motivation conflict. Yet Stoics do not believe that preferred indifferents are to be given any deliberative weight that might count against the rationality of virtuous action, and their adherence this principle appears to rule out a commitment to (3).

A fuller defense of these claims would require a fuller consideration of the details of Stoic deliberation, but the concerns I have raised suggest that the Stoics

²⁸¹ As I understand him, Irwin argues that the Stoics are committed to a version of (3). See T. Irwin, 'Conceptions'; 'Criticisms'; 'Paradox'; 'Stoic Inhumanity'; *Development*, 313-359.

²⁸² As I understand it, Irwin's reading suggests this view. According to Frede, the value of indifferents is "entirely derivative". See M. Frede, 'Good', 71-94. On standard accounts of the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic value, this amounts to a denial of intrinsic value to indifferents. Cf. *supra*, n274.

cannot eliminate the possibility of rational conflict so long as independent weight is given to the value of preferred indifferents. The Stoics' account of rational eudaimonism commits them to the view that there is ultimate reason to pursue only what contributes to an agent's own happiness. In view of this commitment, their exclusion of external resources from an account of happiness cannot be regarded as a mere terminological or taxonomical quibble. It is most plausibly understood as a denial of intrinsic value to all but virtue.²⁸³

4.6 A positive account

If the argument so far is conclusive, then the value of preferred indifferents is neither instrumental nor intrinsic. The former alternative is excluded by clear textual evidence to the contrary. The latter is ruled out by the Stoic commitment to rational eudaimonism. These points support two desiderata that a satisfactory interpretation of the Stoic doctrine of indifferents should satisfy. First, such an account should show that although the value and disvalue of indifferents clearly figures in the deliberations of the rational Stoic agent, this value does not itself provide the agent with reasons to act contrary to virtue. For this is just the result which the Stoic identification of virtue with happiness is supposed to exclude. Second, such an account must avoid the claim that preferred indifferents are those which tend in some way to contribute to virtue and happiness, while dispreferred indifferents are those that tend to obstruct it. An account along these lines simply conflicts with the textual evidence.

²⁸³ The Stoics do not believe that it is rational to regret the loss of preferred indifferents or endorse any retrospective disappointment with virtue's results. Seneca describes his own retrospective outlook in this way: "I do not regret it, nor shall I ever regret it, and no injustice of Fortune shall ever bring me to such a pass that she will hear me say, what was it I wished? What profit have I now from my good intention", (*Ben.* 4.21, trans. Basore). Cf. also *Ep.* 120.13. Many similar texts suggest that the Stoic attitude towards a (virtuous) failure to secure preferred indifferents is not one of rationally justified regret but of rationally obligatory indifference.

These proposals do not exhaust the possibilities, however. The suggestion that indifferents are a source of epistemic rather than practical reasons is supported by some of the best surviving evidence for the Stoic view. Consider, first, what can be known both about the practical deliberations of the Stoic agent and of the epistemic situation of the Stoic sage. According to Diogenes Laertius, an agent who lives in accordance with human and cosmic nature engages “in no activity wont [*eiôthen*] to be forbidden by the universal law (*ho nomos ho koinos*), which is the right reason pervading everything (*ho orthos logos dia pantôn erchomenos*)”.²⁸⁴ This aim is realized when everything is done “on the basis of the concordance (*sumphônian*) of each man’s *daimôn* with the will (*boulêsin*) of the administrator of the whole”.²⁸⁵ To conform to *orthos logos* as expressed in nature is the regulative aim of practical rationality, and this aim is realized by conforming one's own assents and impulses, as far as possible, to the rational purpose of Zeus.²⁸⁶

Now there is one clear sense in which every part of the cosmos cannot fail to conform to Zeus’s *boulêsis*. Since the Stoics are determinists, they hold that all that occurs in the cosmos is causally necessitated, and they regard the entirety of this causal sequence as itself conforming to divine law. In speaking of a rational capacity to conform to nature, then, the Stoics do not intend any contrast that implies an ability to act outside this causal order. What distinguishes a virtuous and happy participation in the cosmic order from a vicious and miserable one is rather the condition one's

²⁸⁴ DL 7.87, trans. Long and Sedley. Cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 66.39: *Quod est summum hominis bonum? Ex naturae voluntate se gerere.*

²⁸⁵ For further comment on this passage, see J. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1969), 262ff. and G. Betegh, 'Cosmological Ethics in the *Timaeus* and Early Stoicism', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 24 (2003), 273-302, at 286ff. Contra Rist, Betegh argues that '*daimôn*' in this passage should be understood to refer to the agent's *hêgemonikon*.

²⁸⁶ Cf. B. Inwood, *Ethics*, 119: “It is [a rational agent’s] duty to adapt himself to this cosmos, to want events to occur as they in fact will. Ideally, a man should never be in the position of wanting something different from the actual course of events, since what happens in the world is the will of Zeus, is the best possible way for things to occur, and since man as a rational agent should assimilate his will to that of the supremely rational agent, who is Zeus.”

hêgemonikon is in as the fate ordained by Zeus unfolds. Every part of the cosmos will do as *orthos logos* ordains, but the parts possessing rationality may do so in one of two ways: either by preserving or failing to preserve a cognitive condition that itself accords with Zeus's reason. Whether the parts of the cosmos that are rational preserve a *virtuous* conformity to nature as they go through the motions of fate will depend on the way in which their rational faculty (*logistikon*) is disposed.

To conform to nature in the sense required for virtue, then, is to ensure that one's *hêgemonikon* preserves a harmony (*sumphônian*) with Zeus's own purpose. Under what conditions will this harmony be achieved? One thought may be set aside at once. As Inwood points out, whatever the particulars of this cognitive condition happen to be, they cannot require that a fully rational Stoic agent actually *foresee* the events Zeus has ordained and, congruently with Zeus's own *boulêsis*, wish things to come about in this way. To the extent that an agent's own actions are causally responsible for future outcomes, the endeavor to predict the future does not provide a coherent model for deliberation. Not even a sage can deliberate about what she *ought* to do by asking *what she is going to do*. Acting in accordance with nature must be consistent, then, with acting on a less than complete knowledge of *orthos logos*. Because a fully rational human agent is not an omniscient agent, the rationality in which her virtue consists will depend on a necessarily limited grasp of right reason. The virtue of a rational *hêgemonikon* must depend, as Frede puts it, on the expression of "perfect rationality under partial ignorance."²⁸⁷

²⁸⁷E.g., Seneca, *Ep.* 109: *non enim omnia sapiens scit*. Cf. also *Ep.* 119.12; G. Kerford, 'What Does the Wise man Know?' in J. Rist (ed.), *The Stoics* (Berkeley, 1978), 125-36; S. Menn, 'Physics as a Virtue', *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, 11 (1995), 1-34; Frede describes the epistemic situation of the Stoic sage as follows: "Claims sometimes made to the contrary notwithstanding, even the Stoic sage is not omniscient. He disposes of a general body of knowledge in virtue of which he has a general understanding of the world. But this knowledge does not put him into a position to know what he is supposed to do in a concrete situation. It does not even allow him to know all the facts which are relevant to a decision in a particular situation. . . . Therefore, even the perfect rationality of the sage is a rationality which relies on experience and conjecture, and involves following what is reasonable or probable. It is crucially a perfect rationality under partial ignorance".

What this means in practice, it appears, is that even the sage must rely on probabilistic judgments in her deliberations. Her virtue will depend not on a complete knowledge of nature's purpose but on a rational assessment of the action that best conforms to nature in light of what is known, on the application of her perfected rationality to the evidence she has. The sage's assents must be rational not in relation to the principles of *orthos logos* all things considered, but in relation to what she is in a position to know about them. If this is so, it must sometimes be the case that a virtuous action is not the action that would be virtuous if every relevant consideration could be taken into account. Or to put it slightly differently, the virtuous course of action for a sage will often, and almost perhaps always, be a course of action that in light of further considerations would not be virtuous at all.²⁸⁸

This point has a further important consequence. If the action-guiding assents of the sage are both probabilistic in this way and also infallibly *true*, as the Stoics claim, it cannot be that the sage who assents to a hormetic impression assents to an impression that (roughly) *A* is the action that accords with *orthos logos*. It must rather be the case that she assents (again roughly) to an impression that *A* is the action *there is most reason to believe* accords with *orthos logos*. And if *A* is indeed the action there is most reason to believe accords with *orthos logos*, then whether or not *A* accords with *orthos logos* all things considered, *A* will be the virtuous course of action for a sage.²⁸⁹ The virtuous course of action in any circumstance will be not be a

See M. Frede, 'Introduction', in M. Frede and G. Striker (eds.), *Rationality in Greek Thought* (Oxford, 1996), 1-28 at 16-17).

²⁸⁸ Cf. Cooper, who speaks of "pursuing or avoiding [indifferents] always with the idea that it may turn out that achieving those objectives on that occasion was not after all what we or anyone else truly needed, because it does not fit in with the needs of the whole universe of which we are organic parts" ('Eudaimonism', 277).

²⁸⁹ I don't mean to claim that these are precisely the descriptions under which the sage will deliberate or assent to impressions, only that a probabilistic operator of this sort must enter into the sage's beliefs in one way or another so as to qualify her hormetic assents. It needn't be built into the hormetic assent itself in order to do this. As Brennan argues, such an operator might be a feature of, e.g., the sage's beliefs about the future, in relation to which it may be reasonable for her to assent to a hormetic impression tensed in the present. Thus if it is (subjectively) probable that thus and such will happen

straightforward function of nature's requirements applied to the situation of the agent. It will rather be a function of the agent's epistemic reasons in relation to these requirements.²⁹⁰

On what evidence, then, will the sage's assent to impressions of this form depend? The Stoic classification of indifferents, I suggest, codifies the states and conditions that rational nature prescribes for human agents not absolutely, but usually or on the whole. It therefore constitutes at least part of the grounds on which a rational Stoic agent will base her assent to hormetic impressions. Thus to say that a particular outcome is preferred is not to say that an agent always has some practical reason to select it. It is, however, to say that an agent always has some reason to *believe* she ought to select it. The fact that health is by nature preferred provides the sage who has a bad toothache with at least some reason to believe that a trip to the doctor is what conformity to nature requires. Though countervailing considerations (that a good Greek doctor is expensive, say) may provide her with reasons to reject this belief, the fact that health is preferred will always supply at least one reason in its favor. Should the sage fail to conserve her health in a particular case, she will nonetheless continue to have at least some reason to believe that she should preserve it and, accordingly, may continue to regard it as preferred. Whether it is in fact virtuous

tomorrow, it may be appropriate in view of this likelihood that the sage visit the dentist today. See T. Brennan, 'Reasonable Impressions in Stoicism', *Phronesis*, 41 (1996), 318-34; Brennan, 'Reservation in Stoic Ethics' ['Reservation'], *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 82 (2000), 149-77. Cf. also A. Bonhöffer, *Ethics*, 244-51. Seneca seems to confirm this general account further at *Ben.* 4.32ff. "We follow not where truth, but where reason, directs us . . . [One may say], 'appearances are deceptive, and it is these which we trust.' Who denies it? Yet I find nothing else from which to form an opinion. These are the footprints I must follow in my search for truth; I have nothing that is more trustworthy. I shall take pains to consider these with all possible care, and shall not be hasty in granting my assent" (trans. Basore).

²⁹⁰ We might put this point by distinguishing the epistemic and practical objectives of the sage. A sage's epistemic goal, I take it, is a perfect grasp of *orthos logos*, and here it appears that even the sage must settle for subjective probabilities. Her practical goal, on the other hand, is always to act in conformity with the balance of these probabilities. This goal, by contrast, is one that is in her power and which she infallibly achieves.

for her to conserve it will depend on the balance of her reasons, on whether going to the doctor is the action she has most reason to believe conforms to *orthos logos*.

If this proposal is correct, then one way in which indifferents constitute the material (*hulê*) and starting point (*archê*) of virtue is by supplying some of the considerations on which an assessment of the course of action that conforms to right reason must be based. But this is just to say that indifferents are a source of epistemic rather than practical reasons. They figure in a rational defense of her actions not as external objectives whose intrinsic or instrumental value justifies the actions taken to secure them, but as grounds for the assents from which an agent's actions flow.²⁹¹ The source of value that justifies and explains the value of virtuous action will itself be a cognitive condition--the system of *katalêpseis* through which the action is motivated.²⁹² Given the Stoic commitment to rational eudaimonism, to the claim that happiness consists in virtue, and to the thesis that virtue itself is knowledge, this is a result we should expect. In treating rationally justified action as a consequence of assent to hormetic impressions, the Stoics effectively treat the norms of practical justification as epistemic norms. The difficulties that arise in understanding the place of indifferents in their theory arise, in part, from a failure to appreciate that this theory applies wholly cognitive standards in its appraisal of actions.

This account is confirmed both by the Stoic doctrine of *hupexairesis*, or reservation, and by the few surviving texts that appear to describe a case of practical

²⁹¹ Cicero renders '*eulogos apologismos*' as '*probabilis ratio*' (*Fin.*3.58).

²⁹² In this respect the Stoic theory resembles recent work in virtue epistemology, according to which epistemic norms are determined in relation to the value of true belief and (for value pluralists), justification. Cf. especially E. Sosa, *A Virtue Epistemology* (Oxford, 2007), Chapter 4. Sosa suggestively explicates epistemic value by way of comparison to, among other things, the arts of dancing and archery (77-91). Cf. *infra*, Chapter 5n347.

deliberation as the Stoics conceive it.²⁹³ Consider the following passages from

Epictetus:

(1) Chrysippus was right to say: ‘As long as the future is uncertain to me I always hold to those things which are better adapted to obtaining the things in accordance with nature (*kata phusin*); for god himself has made me disposed to select these. But if I actually knew that I was fated now to be ill, I would even have an impulse to be ill. For my foot, too, if it had intelligence, would have an impulse to get muddy’.²⁹⁴

(2) [T]he philosophers well say that if the good and excellent man knew what was going to happen, he would help on the processes of disease and death and maiming, because he would realize that this allotment comes from the orderly arrangement of the whole . . . But as it is, seeing that we do not know beforehand what is going to happen, it is our duty to cleave to that which is naturally more fit to be selected, since we are born for this purpose.²⁹⁵

²⁹³ Cf. Seneca, *Ben.* 4.34: “[A]ll that [the sage] undertakes is subject to the reservation (*exceptio*): ‘If nothing happens to prevent’. If we say that all his plans prosper and that nothing happens contrary to his expectation, it is because he has presupposed that something might happen to thwart his designs. It is the impudent man who is confident that Fortune is plighted to himself; the wise man envisages her in both her aspects; he knows how great is the chance of mistake, how uncertain are human affairs, how many obstacles block the success of our plans; he follows alert the doubtful and slippery course of chance, weighs uncertain outcome against the certainty of his purpose. But the reservation without which he makes no plan, undertakes nothing, protects him here also” (trans. Basore); Stob. *Ecl.* 2.115, LS 65W: “They [the Stoics] say that the good man experiences nothing contrary to his desire (*orexis*) or impulse (*hormê*), or purpose (*epibolên*) on account of the fact that in all such cases he acts with reserve (*hupexairesis*) and encounters no obstacles which are unanticipated” (trans. Long and Sedley); M. Ant., *Med.* 4.1: “That which holds the mastery within us, when it is in accordance with Nature, is so disposed towards what befalls, that it can always adapt itself with ease to what is possible and granted us. For it is wedded to no definite material, but, though, in the pursuit of its high aims it works under reservations (*meth’ hupexaireseôs*), yet it converts into material for itself any obstacle that it meets with, just as fire when it gets the mastery of what is thrown in upon it” (trans. Haines); Epict. *Ench.* 2.2: “But employ only impulse and aversion, and these too but lightly, and with reservations (*meth’ hupexaireseôs*), and without straining” (trans. Oldfather, with slight changes). Cf. Seneca, *Tranq.* 13.2-14.1, qtd. in B. Inwood, *Ethics*, 121. For discussion of these passages, see T. Brennan, ‘Reservation’.

²⁹⁴ Epictetus, *Diss.* 2.6.9, trans. Long and Sedley. Judged by the standard of available evidence, the explicit attribution of this position to Chrysippus by a Stoic source constitutes excellent evidence for the orthodox Stoic view. Cf. also *Diss.* 2.5.25-26.

²⁹⁵ *Diss.* 2.10.5-6. Of this passage Bonhöffer remarks, “From the last clause [‘since we are born for this purpose’] as well as from the context of Epictetus’ whole outlook, it clearly follows that a person should not take care of his health on account of the probable advantage which he has from it, but because he recognizes this, unless there are special circumstances, as a *demand of reason*, as a command of god”. See A. Bonhöffer, *Ethics*, 246.

In both of these passages, the rationality of selecting preferred indifferents appears to depend on what an agent is in a position to know about nature's purpose. Chrysippus' comment in the first passage shows that, all else being equal, it is rational to select the preferred over the dispreferred. His justification for this claim introduces a reason for believing the selection is correct (Zeus has made him this way), yet this belief is one that is subject to revision in the light of further evidence. Chrysippus selects what is preferred not because it constitutes a practical end in its own right, but because he has *epistemic* grounds for believing that one selection or another accords with Zeus's purpose.

This way of understanding the role of indifferents satisfies the two desiderata I have mentioned. For it follows, on this view, that the reasons the Stoics associate with indifferents cannot, even in principle, provide an agent with reasons to act other than as virtue requires. Certainly the sage's epistemic reasons may conflict in the sense that some of them may support a particular belief about the content of *orthos logos* while others may undermine it, but these conflicts are to be explained by limitations in her epistemic situation rather than by any conflict among her practical principles. Where (objective) practical reasons may conflict by counting in favor of distinct and incompatible practical ends, conflict among epistemic reasons arises only through the imperfection of one's evidence.²⁹⁶ Imperfect though they may be, the Stoic agent's epistemic reasons will be uniformly directed at securing a single cognitive state, the probabilistic grasp of *orthos logos* on which virtue depends.²⁹⁷ Because the virtuous

²⁹⁶ As Joseph Raz puts it, epistemic reasons "are about the truth of the propositions for or against belief in which they are reasons. The weaker reasons are just less reliable guides to one and the same end". See J. Raz, 'Reasons: Practical and Adaptive' in D. Sobel and S. Wall (eds.) *Reasons for Action* (Cambridge 2009), 37-57 at 44. Evidentiary reasons that are defeasible in the light of further evidence are sometimes characterized as *prima facie* reasons. See, e.g. S. Hurley, *Natural Reasons* (Oxford, 1989), 133: "We do admit the possibility in principle of real conflicts between reasons for action, and between reasons for action and for belief, but not between reasons for belief. . . *Prima facie* [epistemic] reasons are like rules of thumb, that give us reasons provisionally but may turn out not to apply when we learn more about the situation at hand, in which case they have no residual reason-giving force".

²⁹⁷ SVF 3.213, 3.214.

course of action will be the one the sage has most reason to believe conforms to *orthos logos*, the *practical* reasons that apply to her will uniformly favor it. This result is consistent with the Stoic view that the rational end of action consists in virtue alone.

A second important point follows from the claim that indifferents provide the sage with epistemic rather than practical reasons. If preferred and dispreferred indifferents are valuable as grounds for rational belief about *orthos logos*, their value is after all derivative, dependent on the value of rational cognition. Yet we are not thereby forced to concede that the value of *preferred* indifferents in particular consists in an instrumental contribution to virtue, as Lesses suggests. For when it comes to rational deliberation we may equally say that the negative value of *dispreferred* indifferents depends on the same instrumental contribution to virtue. Both classes of indifferents are equally a source of epistemic justification and, as such, equally useful to the virtuous Stoic agent. We can put the point differently by saying that the epistemic role of indifferents in the sage's deliberations explains why indifferents as a class are worth troubling about at all. On the other hand, this role does not explain why some indifferents are preferred and others dispreferred. That distinction is not a function of the relation of indifferent things to virtue but of their place in the natural order, in particular, of the way in which they elicit pre-rational impulse in human agents. Indeed, it is just this feature of indifferents that provides the basis for the sage's rational inferences about the principles of *orthos logos*.

If this account is correct, preferred and dispreferred indifferents do not enter into the deliberations of the Stoic agent as practical objectives at all. On that picture, indifferents themselves provide an agent with practical reasons that may conflict with the requirements of virtue. And this suggestion is very hard to square with the Stoic commitment to rational eudaimonism. On the picture I am proposing, the Stoic classification of indifferents constitutes an imperfect but also indispensable

deliberative tool, a generalization of nature's rational intent to which rational agents must look in the absence of complete knowledge. So understood, the doctrine is a consequence of the Stoics' conviction that human rationality expresses itself most fully by conforming to the principles that govern the natural order, but also of their conviction that humans are only a finite part of that order with finite resources for apprehending it. Because the harmony in which virtue consists cannot depend on a comprehensive grasp of *orthos logos*, it necessarily depends on probabilistic inferences of the sort Chrysippus describes. Such inferences rely on what the distinction between preferred and dispreferred reveals of nature's purpose as a whole.

CHAPTER 5

REASON

5.1 Introduction

I have argued in the preceding chapters for an interpretation according to which Stoic ethics is both eudaimonist and naturalist in form. The Stoics are rational eudaimonists insofar as they explain reasons for action by appealing to an agent's own *eudaimonia*. They are naturalists insofar as they explain the content of *eudaimonia* by appealing both to the particular nature of rational agents and to the order of the cosmos of which human nature is a part. The relation between these central commitments of Stoicism has proved puzzling. Some commentators, impressed by the Stoics' commitment to cosmic nature as an authoritative and (in some sense) universal expression of rational norms, have doubted their claim to offer a genuinely self-interested defense of morality. Others, impressed by the Stoics' claim to eudaimonism, have treated the universal and authoritative elements in Stoic naturalism as later, presciently modern developments resting uneasily on eudaimonist foundations.

This puzzlement is manifest in the bewildering variety of summary assessments of Stoic ethics, some of which may appear mutually exclusive. For instance, though Julia Annas acknowledges that practical reasoning as the Stoics conceive it aims at the agent's happiness overall, she variously describes Stoic ethics as "moral", "impartial" and "prudence-transcending". It is not clear how one might consistently defend all four characterizations of the Stoicism, and Annas tends not to mention them all at once. A.A. Long, who defends the Stoic commitment to eudaimonism at length, elsewhere suggests that in Stoicism, "the pursuit of virtue proves to be a moral obligation, independent of the fact that it is also in one's

interests”.²⁹⁸ Others, such as Alasdair MacIntyre, have suggested that the Stoics abandon a teleological ethics altogether.²⁹⁹ These assessments reflect a basic disagreement about whether or how the prudential character of Stoic eudaimonism fits with the Stoic account of practical reason and its claims.

I want to suggest that the eudaimonist and naturalist commitments of Stoicism do fit together and that they can be seen to support a conception of practical rationality whose central elements are both distinctive and defensible. Though commentators have sometimes emphasized one commitment at the expense of the other, there is no evidence that the Stoics themselves acknowledged any problematic opposition between them or that they marginalized one to explain the other. The fact that commentators have found a tension between them is plausibly explained by a tendency to associate broadly prudential accounts of rationality with internalism or subjectivity about reasons, on the one hand, and impartial or agent-neutral conceptions of rationality with externalism or objectivity on the other.³⁰⁰ Stoicism, however, rejects both of these alternatives. Once this is recognized, there is no antecedent reason why the Stoics should regard an appeal to human welfare as inconsistent with the requirements of universal norms. For happiness, as the Stoics conceive it, requires conformity to such norms.

My aim in this concluding chapter is not to offer a full or even a partial defense of Stoic ethics as a whole, but rather to distinguish some central elements of the

²⁹⁸ A. Long, 'Basis', 145.

²⁹⁹ MacIntyre writes, “[In the Stoic view], to do what is right need not necessarily produce pleasure or happiness, bodily health or worldly or indeed any other success. None of these however are genuine goods; they are good only conditionally upon their ministering to right action by an agent with a rightly formed will. Only such a will is unconditionally good. Hence Stoicism abandoned any notion of a *telos*”. See A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame, 1984), 169. I thank MacIntyre for helpful discussion of the some of the material included in this chapter.

³⁰⁰ This tendency is evident, for example, in Kant’s (and perhaps later in Prichard’s) treatment of eudaimonist theories as broadly hedonist in character, resting on an appeal to inclination or subjective experience. It is perhaps also evident in the fact that, as I note below, commentators tend to see in Stoicism a thoroughgoing commitment to impartiality.

account of practical reason implicit in the Stoic view and to emphasize those points at which, in consequence, some of the recent summary assessments of Stoic ethics are mistaken. I first consider the recent claim of some commentators that Stoic ethics endorses an impartial and (thereby) broadly Kantian conception of practical reason. I then argue that although this judgment is misleading in several important respects, there is in fact a central feature of the Stoic account that may plausibly be compared to Kantian theory and which helps to explain the parallels between Stoicism and Kantianism commentators have claimed to find. I conclude by suggesting that although the central elements of Stoic theory do not support all of the assessments commentators have proposed, we may nonetheless agree with Michael Frede's judgment that there is "much to be said in favor of the Stoic conception [of practical reason]." ³⁰¹

5.2 Two arguments for Stoic impartiality

The question whether the Stoics are to be credited with an impartial conception of practical rationality has been central to a number of recent studies of Stoic ethics. Julia Annas and M.M. McCabe offer perhaps the most conspicuous examples of such studies. Both claim that Stoic theory at least aspires to a form of impartiality, and McCabe concludes that early Stoic theory achieves it. Annas agrees that the Stoics are "the first ethical theorists clearly to commit themselves to the thesis that morality requires impartiality to all others from the moral point of view". ³⁰² Yet Annas also suggests, as McCabe does not, that Stoic moral psychology does not quite rise to this challenge. According to Annas, "if Hierocles gives a standard account [of *oikeiōsis*],

³⁰¹ See M. Frede, 'Reason', 50-63.

³⁰² J. Annas, *Morality*, 265. Cf. also Annas, 'Ancient Ethics'; Annas, 'The Good Life and Good Lives of Others' ['Good Life'], in E. Paul, F. Miller and J. Paul (eds.), *The Good Life and the Human Good* (Cambridge, 1992) 133-148.

the Stoics recognize the importance of impartiality in ethics, but give the wrong mechanism for reaching it".³⁰³ Annas suggests that although the Stoics appear to acknowledge that morality requires impartiality, their theory in fact conceives of morality in partial terms: "[S]tretched or diluted partiality", she writes, "will never amount to impartiality".³⁰⁴

McCabe agrees that diluted partiality should not be substituted for impartiality, but she nonetheless arrives at a more charitable assessment of Stoicism. On her account, we can discern two distinct theories of *oikeiōsis* in the Stoic tradition, one of which goes back to Chrysippus himself, the other of which has been distorted by various later accretions.³⁰⁵ Since (in McCabe's view) the older Stoic theory rejects the first-person perspective implicit in later accounts, it can accommodate the sort of robust impartiality a fully moral theory requires, one which requires that the interests of others "will defeat your own interests in cases of conflict".³⁰⁶ McCabe suggests that genuine impartiality transcends selfishness (as Annas suggests it transcends prudence) "by showing that there is another source of the demand that we act altruistically".³⁰⁷ Impartiality of this form, she writes, is comparable to "Kant's move to separate categorical imperatives from those which are conditioned by our own desires".³⁰⁸ Annas and McCabe therefore agree that impartiality requires some form of agent-neutral justification. But Annas denies, while McCabe affirms, that the Greek Stoics had a theory that satisfies this condition.

We can distinguish two general lines of argument adduced to support these assessments. The first appeals to the *overriding* character of moral requirements as

³⁰³ Annas, *Morality*, 269.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 269. Cf. 270: "A demand of reason, that one treat all alike, is not the conclusion of a process of extending personal affections: that can result only in weak partiality, not in impartiality".

³⁰⁵ M.M. McCabe, 'Two Accounts', 413-44 at 432-42.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 414.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 413.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 413n3.

the Stoics conceive them. On Annas's account of Stoicism, the Stoic "agent's reasoning is prudential insofar as the action is aimed at securing health, security, and so on, and moral insofar as it is aimed at virtue--done for the right kind of reason and from a virtuous disposition".³⁰⁹ Annas here suggests that Stoic theory supports a contrast between prudential reasoning, understood as reasoning about preferred indifferents, and moral reasoning, understood as reasoning about virtue. She then appeals to this contrast to argue that Stoic theory recognizes the distinctive character of moral reasons:

Moral reasons are special just because of this role they have in our deliberations: they silence or override other kinds of reasons just because of the kind of reason that they are. . . . The Stoics make this point [about reasons] in the clearest and most uncompromising way.³¹⁰

On this interpretation, Stoic theory distinguishes between moral and non-moral reasons and holds that the former "silence or override" the latter. In Annas's view, this point supports the supposition that the Stoic ethics endorses a distinctively moral and broadly impartial framework.

A second line of argument appeals to considerations having to do with *oikeiôsis*. Annas and McCabe both cite a well-known fragment from Hierocles, which pictures the "well-tempered" individual at the center of a series of concentric circles circumscribing those to whom she possesses some social obligation. The inner circles enclose those to whom she is more closely related, such as family and friends; the

³⁰⁹ J. Annas, 'Prudence', 252. Cf. 250: "the step of recognizing the special, prudence-transcending value of reasoning is, for [the Stoics], the same as the step of recognizing the special value of virtue (moral value, as we would put it), different in kind from that of things that naturally have value for us from a self-regarding point of view, like health and wealth".

³¹⁰ Annas, 'Ancient Ethics', 121. Annas especially presses the point here, but she appeals to it elsewhere as well. Gill summarizes her position as follows: "The Stoic thesis, explained by comparison with Kant, is taken to be that the natural course of human development will lead us to see that we have overriding *reasons* to give priority to virtue and that to do so is consistent with our nature as rational agents". See C. Gill, 'Development', 105.

outer circles enclose those more distantly related, such as compatriots and even foreigners. According to Hierocles,

once these [relationships] all have been surveyed, it is the task of a well-tempered man, in his proper treatment of each group, to draw the circles together somehow towards the centre . . . It is incumbent on us to respect people from the third circle as if they were those from the second, and again to respect our other relatives as if they were those from the third circle.³¹¹

McCabe understands this passage to endorse the “extended egoism” of the later theory of *oikeiôsis* she distinguishes, the sort that falls short of genuine altruism.³¹² Annas, by contrast, argues that the passage requires “that from the moral point of view the agent (1) not weight his own interests merely because they are his own and (2) not weight his own particular attachments and commitments merely because they are his own”.³¹³ Yet Annas also cites it to show that Stoic theory gives the “wrong mechanism” for satisfying this requirement. McCabe therefore regards this passage as reporting a later, egoistic version of the Stoic theory that falls short of the form of impartiality originally endorsed by Chrysippus. Annas, on the other hand, believes it shows that Stoic ethics requires a form of impartiality it does not actually support.

5.3 Three accounts of impartiality.

Both lines of argument are problematic. To see this, we can usefully distinguish three ways in which theories of practical reason are sometimes said to be impartial. The most influential characterization is perhaps that of Nagel.³¹⁴ In the *Possibility of Altruism* and subsequently in *The View from Nowhere*, Nagel defends a distinction between agent-neutral and agent-relative reasons, arguing that altruism in

³¹¹ Stob., *Ecl.* 4.671ff., LS 57G (trans. Long and Sedley).

³¹² McCabe, 'Two Accounts', 421-23.

³¹³ Annas, 'Good Life', 141.

³¹⁴ Whom McCabe cites. Cf. 'Two Accounts', 417n23.

its purest form always requires recognition of and sensitivity to the former. ‘Pure altruism’, as Nagel characterizes it, “is the direct influence of one’s person’s interest on the actions of another, simply because in itself the interest of the former provides the latter with a reason to act”.³¹⁵ As Nagel develops this conception, pure altruism turns out to depend on the possibility of acting in accordance with agent-neutral reasons that “can be given a general form which does not include an essential reference to the person who has [them]”.³¹⁶ In *The Possibility of Altruism*, Nagel holds that all agent-relative reasons, which refer to the agent to whom they apply, are “subsumable under neutral ones”.³¹⁷ Though *The View from Nowhere* rejects this reductive claim in favor of a weaker view, it too maintains that “the development of a moral position” depends on the recognition of at least some agent-neutral reasons that are not reducible to agent-relative ones.³¹⁸

This account, it should be noted, is about the *source* or *character* of practical rationality, not about its content. That is to say, whatever motives or actions practical rationality may happen enjoin, the kind of altruism envisioned by Nagel requires that at least some of the ultimate reasons to which the rational agent responds omit any reference to the agent or the agent’s own interests. This account also involves a claim about the relationship between distinctively moral (i.e. agent-neutral) reasons and prudential ones. Explicitly distinguishing his account of a genuinely moral theory from the ethics of Plato and Aristotle, Nagel writes that on the view he favors, “the

³¹⁵ Nagel, *The Possibility of Altruism* [*Possibility*] (Oxford, 1970), 80.

³¹⁶ Compare Pettit’s formulation of the distinction: “An agent-relative reason is one that cannot be fully specified without pronominal back-reference to the person for whom it is a reason An agent-neutral reason is one that can be fully specified without such an indexical device”. See P. Pettit, “Universality Without Utilitarianism”, *Mind*, 72 (1987), 74-82 at 75. In his earlier *The Possibility of Altruism*, Nagel characterizes agent neutral reasons as *objective* reasons. The terminology of “agent relative” and “agent neutral” reasons is due to Parfit. See D. Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford, 1984), 143.

³¹⁷ This is Nagel’s own characterization of *Possibility* in *The View from Nowhere*. See T. Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* [*View*], (Oxford, 1989), 159.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 159. Compare *View*, 197: “[Aristotle’s moral theory] is wrong, because moral requirements have their source in the claims of other persons This is inevitable so long as ethics includes any significant condition of impartiality”.

moral life overrides the good life”.³¹⁹ On Nagel’s account, then, the altruism required by a fully moral theory entails a commitment to a conception of rational justification that (1) eliminates any reference to the agent to whom the norms of practical reason apply, (2) distinguishes between prudential and moral reasons, and (3) assigns overriding authority to the latter.

But impartiality is not always understood to involve a claim about the *form* practical reason must take. It is sometimes understood as a claim about the *scope* of the obligations practical reason enjoins. According to this second conception, a theory of practical reason may be impartial insofar as it recognizes that all persons, no matter how far removed, have at least *some* moral claim on us in virtue of their status as rational agents. This is often conjoined to a claim that equal respect, if not equal concern, is owed to all persons.³²⁰ So understood, impartiality requires the recognition of a duty to humanity in general, yet nothing about the source or nature of our obligations towards others or about the weight of the reasons one has follows from this claim alone.³²¹ Impartiality of this sort is compatible, for instance, with the “self-referential” altruism defended by C.D. Broad, which recognizes that the relative weight of our obligations to others depends on the closeness of our relation to them. This second conception of impartiality therefore cuts across the distinction between agent-neutral and agent-relative theories, for both kinds of theory may or may not hold that the requirements of rational obligation are universal in this sense.

³¹⁹ Nagel, *View*, 196.

³²⁰ See, e.g., R. Miller, 'Cosmopolitan Respect and Patriotic Concern', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 27 (1998), 202-224.

³²¹ Cf. C. D. Broad, 'Self and Others' ['Self'], in D. Cheney (ed.), *Broad's Critical Essays in Moral Philosophy* (London, 1971), 262-82; C. D. Broad, 'Certain Features of Moore's Ethical Doctrines', in P. Schlipp, (ed.), *The Philosophy of G.E. Moore* (Evanston and Chicago, 1942), 41-67. For discussion, see M. Smith, 'Neutral and Relative Value after Moore', *Ethics*, 113 (2003), 576-98; D. Brink, 'Impartiality and Associative Duties', *Utilitas*, 13 (2001), 152-72; D. Brink, *Perfectionism and the Common Good: Themes in the Philosophy of T.H. Green* (Oxford, 2003), 55-60.

Finally, both of these conceptions of impartiality ought to be distinguished from yet a third position which Broad refers to as “ethical neutralism”. On this account, the interests of all persons are to be given *equal weight* by a rational agent, regardless of the particular relations in which the agent stands to them. This view involves a claim neither about the source nor about the scope of rational obligation but rather about its *content*. As Broad points out, impartiality of this sort has frequently been found to conflict with the requirements of common sense.³²² Broad’s point is born out by the fact that deontological theories tend to defend various agent centered-duties (such as a duty not to perform actions it is sometimes permissible to allow), while consequentialist accounts are frequently concerned to incorporate agent-centered constraints and options into the requirement to maximize the general good. Since agent-relational theories of practical reason (which include broadly Humean accounts as well theories such as Broad’s) are incompatible with Nagel’s pure altruism, the first sort of impartiality can hardly be regarded as an uncontroversial requirement on a moral theory. Nor, however, can the third form distinguished by Broad. Only the second form of impartiality, which recognizes the universal scope of moral obligation, might fairly be said to constitute a generally acknowledged constraint on a plausible theory of practical rationality.

Which of these conceptions of impartiality, if any, is Stoic theory supposed to endorse? In suggesting that Stoic theory recognizes a distinctively moral category of reasons or requirements that somehow *override* other, non-moral considerations, Annas and McCabe appear to have something like Nagel’s account of *pure altruism* in mind.³²³ Yet neither of the arguments they invoke supports the attribution of such a

³²² See C.D. Broad, 'Self', 280.

³²³ Annas and McCabe not alone in applying the terminology of overriding requirements or reasons to characterize the Stoic position. Cf. Stephen Menn, 'Physics as a Virtue', in J. Clearly and W. Wians (eds.), *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, (Leiden, 1995), 1-34. Gill ('Development') cites Annas approvingly on this point.

conception to the Stoics. Since the rational eudaimonism to which the Stoics are committed refers essentially to the agent's own welfare or *eudaimonia*, Stoic theory does not appear to recognize a category of agent-neutral considerations of the sort Nagel's conception requires. Since rational justification is essentially agent-relational, on the Stoic view, there is no possibility of agent-neutral considerations overriding or canceling agent-relational ones. More fundamentally, the effort to show that moral reasons "override" or "cancel" non-moral, prudential reasons can only result in a basic distortion of the Stoic theory. Claims about the overriding status of virtue presuppose the possibility of conflict between virtue and other rational aims.³²⁴ Yet as I have argued, a central aim of Stoic ethics is to eliminate the possibility of such conflict. Since the Stoic account of practical rationality is monistic in a way that excludes the possibility of rational conflict between virtue and other aims, the impartial character of Stoic virtue cannot be established by way of appeal to this conflict.

It is therefore misleading to speak of the reasons provided by virtue as overriding or outweighing self-interested appeals in Stoicism, first, because the Stoics do not recognize reasons that are not grounded in the rational pursuit of virtue, second, because they characterize the reasons virtue provides an agent in self-interested terms. Stoic theory does not support a contrast between impartial concern for virtue and self-interested concern for objects like health and wealth, both because the Stoics do not regard the contributions made by health and wealth as part of one's interest and because they do not recognize any reason for pursuing these objects that is

³²⁴ It has been suggested to me that if we suppose that these further rational aims are not opposed to virtue, we might regard them merely as easily overridden. Here there seem to be two possibilities. If the further rational aims are not opposed to virtue in the sense that they are themselves satisfied by the virtuous course of action, this would appear to be a case in which there is no rational conflict to begin with. On the other hand, if the further rational aims cannot be satisfied by the virtuous course of action and are easily overridden only in the sense that the preponderance of reasons clearly favors virtue, this shows, perhaps, that the conflict is a weak one and easily resolved by a rational agent. It does not seem to show that there is no conflict at all.

independent of the reasons virtue itself provides. Since virtue is to be identified with happiness, there is no area of rational concern recognized by Stoic theory that can be characterized as self-interested or to which we can appeal to mark a contrast with rational concern for others. In evaluating the Stoic theory, the task is not to characterize two forms of deliberation or justification, but to decide how best to characterize a single justificatory account. We may of course, conclude that the Stoic conception of *eudaimonia* does not describe a plausible account of human welfare. But this shows that we disagree with the Stoics, not that the Stoics did not themselves regard their account of rational justification as a prudential one. If we wish to see how the Stoics understand their own theory, we need to consider the conceptual connections the Stoics themselves defend. These connections support the claim that the Stoics conceive of rational justification in prudential terms.

What of Hierocles' image of concentric circles? Annas believes this passage articulates a conception of impartiality according to which "I am not morally entitled to favour either myself or my mother, just because, outside the moral point of view, I am naturally more attached to my interests and those of my mother than I am to those of other people".³²⁵ It is not quite clear what Annas means by moral entitlement. Understood as a claim about reasons, however, this suggests the sort of ethical neutralism Broad describes. But even apart from the fact that impartiality of this sort is not clearly a desirable feature in a moral theory, it is not evident that the excerpt from Hierocles supports it. Hierocles' image is susceptible of at least two distinct interpretations. According to one way of reading the passage, Hierocles' "well-tempered" agent aims to pull even the outermost circle into the inner one, thus weighting the interests of even the "furthest Mysian" equally with her own. Something like this reading appears to be assumed by Annas. On the other hand, as

³²⁵ *Morality*, 267. Annas offers this as a gloss on her account of impartiality.

Irwin points out, Hierocles may only mean to suggest that we ought to pull the outer circles inward to a degree, acknowledging at least some degree of rational obligation towards even the most distantly removed persons. So understood, the passage suggests merely that the scope of rational concern extends to all persons. Though this reading supports the second account of impartiality I have distinguished, it says nothing about the content of specific other-regarding duties or about how these are to be weighed in deciding the appropriate course of action.

None of the texts cited by Annas or McCabe appears to support an account of altruism along the lines envisioned by Nagel. If it is correct to suggest that the early Stoics conceive of rational justification in agent-neutral terms, it is also clear that their theory as it has come down to us does not support such an account, even in principle.³²⁶ Nor does it appear to support a form of ethical neutralism, and it is far from clear that we should wish it to do so. In fact the only form of impartiality to which Stoic theory quite clearly seems committed involves a claim about the universal scope of moral obligation. Indeed, it might be thought an important strength of the Stoic theory that it splits the difference, as it were, between agent-neutral, externalist conceptions of practical reason like Nagel's, which eliminates any reference to the agent to whom the reasons apply, and conceptions that are both agent-relational *and* internalist in form, which explain the force of justificatory reasons by appeals to motivation.³²⁷ In contrast to both positions, the Stoic theory assumes an agent-relational but nonetheless externalist account.

³²⁶ McCabe cites a number of further texts, none of which clearly commits the Stoics to an agent-neutral conception of reasons. McCabe ultimately relies on a reconstructed account of the Stoic account of moral responsibility to show that Chrysippus' own theory involved a commitment to the sort of impartiality Nagel envisions.

³²⁷ E.g., the theories of Mark Schroeder and Michael Smith fall into this category.

5.4. *Are the Stoics Kantians?*

I have so far emphasized a difference between Stoicism and broadly Humean accounts of rational justification, as well a difference between Stoicism and agent-neutral accounts. Unlike Hume, the Stoics do not make motivation fundamental to the explanation of reasons for action, and this point aligns the Stoics with Kant in the broad sense that, like Kant, the Stoics are prepared to endorse categorical requirements of practical rationality. It is probably also fair to categorize the Stoic view as one according to which agents have categorical reasons to act, or reasons that apply to agents “independently of their aims”.³²⁸ Yet these points do not clearly make the Stoic view of practical rationality any more Kantian than other eudaimonist accounts, which may also acknowledge the possibility of reasons that do not depend on an agent's motivational states. Indeed, in one respect the Stoic theory may seem to be further removed from a Kantian position than are other forms of eudaimonism, for these may recognize the possibility of rational conflict between the requirements of virtue and other, self-interested concerns. In Kant's view, conflict of the sort Stoicism denies helps to bring out the worth of the good will.³²⁹ Can the Stoic theory be said to be distinctively Kantian in any specific respects?

I believe the answer is ‘no’ in one important respect and ‘yes’ in another. To begin with an important difference, although the Stoics acknowledge with Kant the categorical nature of virtue's requirements, they do not attempt to ground these requirements, as Kant does, in the character of rational agency itself. Categorical imperatives, in Kant's view, are synthetic, *a priori* propositions.³³⁰ They apply to experience, but their authoritative character (*der Grund der Verbindlichkeit*) is

³²⁸ Cf. D. Brink, 'Kantian Rationalism: Inescapability, Authority, and Supremacy', in G. Cullity and B. Gaut (eds.), *Ethics and Practical Reason* (Oxford, 1997), 255-92 at 259.

³²⁹ Cf. Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 398-99, Acad. ed.

³³⁰ *Groundwork*, 420 (Acad. ed.), trans. H. J. Paton.

supposed to consist "not in the nature of man nor in the nature of the world in which he is placed, but solely *a priori* in the concepts of pure reason".³³¹ In Stoicism, by contrast, there is no discernible attempt to ground practical principles in a conception of rational agency that can be established *a priori*, and there is nothing in Stoicism that answers to this dimension of Kantian moral philosophy generally.³³² Though the Stoics agree that virtue's requirements do not depend on contingent elements of human psychology, they do not attempt to safeguard moral principles by placing them beyond pale of experience altogether. Nature itself, according to Cicero, is the *fons iuris*, the source of the moral law.³³³ Reason, says Seneca, is the "imitation of nature", and "this it is that reason looks to and consults."³³⁴ In contrast to Kant, the Stoics locate the authority and requirements of practical reason within the realm of experience, in a cosmic pattern that is grasped (albeit imperfectly) only by carefully discriminating among impressions.

There is one fundamental respect, however, in which Stoic ethics might fairly be said to break with the Platonic and Aristotelian ethical tradition and to anticipate the Kantian. Plato and Aristotle are plausibly understood to regard external goods as part of happiness, as valuable in a way that provides agents with practical reasons not explained by the value of virtue. By contrast, the Stoics leave no room in their

³³¹ *Groundwork*, 389 (Acad. ed.), trans. H. J. Paton.

³³² Part of what is at stake in this contrast is the question whether it is correct to say that in the Stoic view, "the standards of practical reason can be derived, at least in outline, from the nature of agency or practical thought", a claim sometimes taken to characterize broadly Kantian accounts of practical rationality. See K. Setiya, *Reasons without Rationalism* (Princeton, 2007), 14-15 at 14. Cf. also G. Cullity and B. Gaut, 'Introduction', in G. Cullity and B. Gaut (eds.), *Ethics and Practical Reason* (Oxford, 1997), 1-27 at 5. The Stoics have been faulted for failing to articulate this feature of practical reasoning clearly: "Unfortunately, the Stoics . . . do a much less thorough job than Kant of examining the features of formal reasoning that lead us to accept the peculiar value of virtue. There is nothing corresponding to Kant's introduction of universalizing one's maxims, of seeking a purely formal object for moral reasoning, and so on". See J. Annas, *Morality*, 170. As Brennan points out, there is no reason to suppose that the Stoics intend to employ a conception of rationality as formal consistency at all. By '*homologia*' the Stoics mean not *consistency* but *conformity*. See T. Brennan, *The Stoic Life* (Oxford, 2005), 138-41, 151-52n5.

³³³ *Off.* 3.72.

³³⁴ Seneca, *Ep.* 66.39.

account of rational justification for anything other than virtue itself. They argue that happiness is that for the sake of which every rational action is undertaken and is not itself sought for the sake of anything further. Since they also hold that happiness and virtue are extensional equivalents, nothing that falls outside the scope of virtue can supply the justificatory ground of virtuous character and action, on the Stoic account.³³⁵ Not only is virtue an intrinsic good, in the Stoic view, its goodness in no way depends on any further outcome it secures. “Virtue’s value,” Seneca says, “belongs wholly to the intellect; if this performs its duty, whatever else is lacking is the fault of fortune”.³³⁶ Together with the identification of virtue and happiness, rational eudaimonism effectively commits the Stoics to a view frequently attributed to Kant: that the intentional features of a virtuous action exhaust the ground of its value.³³⁷

This axiological point has a further, psychological corollary. Like the Kantian, the Stoic theory has corresponding implications about the character of appropriate motivation, and here again there is an instructive contrast to be drawn with other eudaimonist views. On Aristotle’s account, though virtuous actions are to be chosen for their own sake, it is not the case that virtue is the only appropriate object of rational desire. Nor is it the case that a virtuous agent will not be motivated by the external goods virtue may bring.³³⁸ On Aristotle’s analysis the objects of the virtuous

³³⁵ I’m here assuming an essential connection between intrinsic value and objective normative reasons. Cf. *supra*, Chapter 4n275.

³³⁶ *Ben.* 4.21.4 (trans. Basore, with changes). Cf. *Fin.* 3.70: [T]he school that I am discussing rejects absolutely the adoption or approbation of justice or friendship for utility’s sake, since the same utility might ruin or corrupt these” (trans. Woolf).

³³⁷ E.g., *Groundwork* 399 (Acad. ed.): “an action done from duty has its moral worth, not in the purpose attained by it, but in the maxim in accordance with which it is decided upon” (trans. Paton). For the view that Kant actually means this, see B. Herman, ‘On the Value of Acting from the Motive of Duty’, in *The Practice of Moral Judgment* (Harvard, 1993), 1-22.

³³⁸ Aristotle distinguishes action (*praxis*) from production (*poiêsis*), and he says clearly that virtuous agents chose virtuous action for its own sake. It is a further question, however, whether Aristotle means to include contingent results in his analysis of virtuous action. Jennifer Whiting argues that Aristotle does understand virtuous action so as to include the contingent result at which the agent aims (e.g., benefit to one’s friend), and hence that the agent who chooses virtuous action for its own sake chooses

agent's decision (*prohairesis*) and deliberation (*bouleusis*) are necessarily restricted to the means available to her.³³⁹ Yet this is not true of her rational motivations. Rational desire (*boulêsis*), which Aristotle contrasts with deliberation and decision, is appropriately directed at final ends beyond an agent's control.³⁴⁰ Although on Aristotle's account a doctor cannot *decide* to heal her patient, since this result is not up to her, she will certainly be motivated by a desire for that outcome, and this desire will be a rational one. Similarly, no agent can fully control her own happiness, in Aristotle's view, but it is nonetheless rational for her to desire it.

The Stoics agree with Aristotle's claim that rational desire is appropriately directed at final ends.³⁴¹ But they deny, as Aristotle does not, that rational desire may be directed at final ends that are not up to the agent, or indeed at any external result beyond the agent's control. This point can also be seen to follow from the fundamental Stoic commitments I have mentioned. Since happiness, as the single end of rational desire, consists in virtue, and since virtue is up to the agent, no desire for any final end that cannot be realized through one's own agency will be rational, on the Stoic account. That is why Seneca can write,

I have, says [a good conscience] what I wished (*volui*), what I strove for (*quod petii*). I do not regret it, nor shall I ever regret it, and no injustice of

something she cannot fully control. See J. Whiting, 'Eudaimonia, External Results, and Choosing Virtuous Actions for Themselves', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 65 (2002), 270-89. Moreover, Aristotle sometimes seems to endorse the view that virtuous actions will be beyond the control of the agent to the degree to which they require external resources (e.g., *EN* 1177a-78b9). On the Stoic account, by contrast, the necessary and sufficient conditions of an action are satisfied by cognitive states that are wholly up to the agent. Cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 113.23 (SVF 2.836).

³³⁹ E.g. *EN* 1112b9ff.: "We deliberate not about ends, but about what promotes ends. A doctor, for instance, does not deliberate about whether he will cure, or an orator about whether he will persuade . . . rather we lay down the end, and then examine the ways and means to achieve it" (trans. Irwin). Cf. 1139a30ff.

³⁴⁰ E.g., *EN* 1111b20ff.: "For we do not decide on impossible things—anyone claiming to decide on them would seem a fool; but we do wish (*boulêsis d'esti*) for impossible things . . . Again, we wish for the end more [than for the things that promote it], but we decide on things that promote the end" (trans. Irwin).

³⁴¹ The Stoics define *boulêsis* as *eulogos orexis*, a rational desire; *orexis*, in turn, is a *hormê logikê* or *logikê kinêsis* directed at the *telos* of *eudaimonia*.

Fortune shall ever bring me to such a pass that she will hear me say, what was it I wished (*quid mihi volui*)? What profit have I now from my good intention (*bona voluntas*)?"³⁴²

As this and similar passages make clear, there is no room in the Stoic account for rational regret, provided one has acted virtuously. Conversely, no external outcome can provide an appropriate focus of a rational agent's motivation (*boulêsis/voluntas*). Stoic ethics can therefore be said to approximate the Kantian theory both in its treatment of virtue as the single ground of value, and in its insistence that virtue itself is the only appropriate focus of rational motivation. Since virtue is the sole component of happiness and that for the sake of which a rational agent acts, the value of virtue is wholly independent of its results. On the Stoic account, virtue shines, like the Kantian will, as the only unconditioned source of moral value.

5.5 Virtue as performance

These broadly Kantian features of the Stoic theory of reason expose them to criticism when conjoined to a further thesis the Stoics inherit from Socrates, namely, that virtue itself is a *skill*, the skill of living well. Cicero reports that Carneades combined these elements of the Stoic view to construct an effective polemic against the Stoic position:

It is obvious [Carneades says] that no skill is concerned with itself. We have the particular skill on the one hand and its object on the other. Thus medicine is the skill of health, navigation the skill of steering a ship. Similarly, wisdom is the skill of living, and it is necessary that it too have as its basis and starting-point something external.³⁴³

Carneades holds that every skill must be directed at some distinct result, and he offers

³⁴² *Ben.* 4.21, trans. Basore.

³⁴³ *Fin.* 5.16, Woolf's translation.

the examples of medicine and navigation to illustrate the point. Cicero tells us further that Carneades agreed with Aristotle that this result is that *for the sake of which* [*causa*] the skill is practiced, and that he applied this analysis to the case of virtue. If virtue is a skill, as the Stoics claim, then according to Carneades this skill “will consist . . . in . . . doing everything for the sake of [*causa*] . . . getting [the goods of fortune], even if one does not attain any of them.”³⁴⁴ Carneades argues that as with medicine and navigation, virtue is justified by the contingent ends it tries to achieve, even if it sometimes fails to achieve them.³⁴⁵ A mixed account of eudaimoniam, which makes room for external resources in its account of the *telos*, can accommodate Carneades’ point. But Stoic eudaimonism cannot, for it excludes from happiness every outcome beyond an agent’s control. The Stoics, Carneades concludes, ought to adjust their conception of the end in order to accommodate their claim that virtue is a skill.

The Stoics decline to do this. Instead, they reject the assumption on which Carneades’ polemic is based. It is not the case, they argue, that every skill is directed at an external result that justifies its practice. In particular, the skill of wisdom is not like this. According to Marcus Aurelius, “reason and the skill of reasoning (*logikê technê*) are . . . self-sufficing faculties. Starting from the appropriate principle (*oikeias archês*), they journey to the end set before them (*to prokeimenon telos*)”.³⁴⁶ Cicero

³⁴⁴ *Fin* 5.19, Woolf’s translation.

³⁴⁵ According to Cicero, Carneades argued that virtue is no part of happiness at all, and that happiness is in fact a fully contingent end that consists in *securing* health, wealth and the goods of fortune generally. Cicero adds, in a very valuable aside, that Carneades defended this account of happiness for the sake of arguing with the Stoics: “Carneades also suggested the view that the highest good is to enjoy the primary objects nature has recommended—but he did not do so because he approved it, but in opposition to the Stoics” (*Luc.* 131, trans. Brittain).

³⁴⁶ *Mar. Ant., Med.* 5.14 (trans. Haines, with minor changes). Here Marcus uses ‘*prokeimenon*’ just as Cicero (*Fin.* 3.16) and Seneca use ‘*propositum*’, to describe a proposed result (virtue) that is up to the agent to secure. Cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 85.32. Irwin holds that the Stoics “call the external result the ‘objective’ or ‘work proposed’ (*prokeimenon ergon*, Latin *propositum*)”. (See T. Irwin, ‘Conceptions’, 230.) This suggestion is ultimately due to Rieth, who bases it on a supposed resemblance between one of Antipater’s accounts of the Stoic end and Aristotle’s account of crafts like medicine and oratory. See O. Rieth, ‘Über das Telos der Stoiker’, *Hermes*, 69 (1934), 13-45. According to Rieth, “Das *prokeimenon ergon* des [Stoic] Schützen ist zu treffen” (28). If this is so, then the Stoic sage aims to achieve what is not within her control. In the Stoic view, the *ekkeimenos skopos* is *achieving* happiness

similarly reports that

[The Stoics] do not think that wisdom is like navigation or medicine. Rather it is like the acting or dancing that I just mentioned. Here the end, namely the performance of the skill, is contained within the skill itself, not sought outside it . . . It is ignorant (*inscite*) to compare the end of medicine and navigation with the end of wisdom.³⁴⁷

The Stoics compare virtue to acting and dancing because these skills fit the Stoic conception of reason in a way that medicine and navigation do not. In particular, the value of these activities does not depend on any outcome beyond the activities

(Stob., *Ecl* 2.77ff.); hence the Stoic sage infallibly hits her *skopos* (Stob., *Ecl* 2.112) and attains the *prokeimenon* (SVF 1.216 = Stob., *Ecl.*, 2.99); Accordingly, neither the Stoic *skopos* nor the Stoic *prokeimenon* should be identified with any outcome not up to a rational agent. Since Cicero explicitly rejects the comparison of virtue to medicine and navigation (*Fin.* 3.23), Rieth's view can be defended only by drawing an implausible distinction between the structure of the craft of archery, on the one hand, and that of medicine and navigation on the other: "Dafür nennt Cicero andere *stochastikai technai*, die Heilkunst und die Steuerkunst (*Fin.* 3.24), aber nur um zu zeigen, dass ihr Telos andersartig ist. Bei jenen Künsten ist die Zielleistung nicht in der kunstgerechten Betätigung enthalten, sondern von äußeren Umständen abhängig" (30). Rieth here implies, implausibly, that the end of archery can be realized independently of external circumstances, although the ends of medicine and navigation cannot. In view of the glaring etymological association of archery with *stochastikai technai* in general, this thesis would almost certainly have struck the ancients as bizarre (cf. Plutarch, *Comm. Not.* 1071c). If Antipater ever held it, he must either have invited Carneades' criticisms or offered a pathetic rejoinder to them. There is no need to attribute the comparison of virtue to archery to the Stoics, however, for the protasis with which Cicero introduces the now famous analogy (*ut enim si cui propositum sit collineare hastam aliquo aut sagittam*) suggests that Cicero's archer is an exceptional case: he proposes only to aim correctly. Moreover, Cicero plainly introduces the example in order to counter the accusation that the Stoics are committed to two distinct ends. Both points support the view that Carneades rather than the Stoics first introduced the comparison with archery. Antipater's attested conformity to ordinary Stoic usage of the terms '*telos*' and '*skopos*' (SVF 3.63, pg. 255, line 22) further confirms this view, and Seneca (*Ep.* 85.32) says explicitly that the helmsman who proposes to make a safe landfall is *not* a proper analog for Stoic virtue. Rieth's suggestion has nevertheless been accepted by A. Long ['Carneades'], M. Soreth ['Die zweite Telos-Formel des Antipater von Tarsus', *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 50, 1968, 48-72], and B. Inwood ['Goal and Target in Stoicism', *Journal of Philosophy*, 83 (1986), 547-56], among others. In general the view is now widely disseminated in the literature on Stoicism. Cf., e.g., N. Wolterstorff, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (Princeton, 2008), 166: "Virtues, [the Stoics] held, are stochastic skills".

³⁴⁷ . . . *inscite autem medicinae et gubernationis ultimum cum ultimo sapientiae comparatur* (*Fin.* 3.25, trans. Woolf with changes). Cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 87.15-16: "Another wrong premise, [the Peripatetics] say, "for we notice that goods fall to the lot of the very lowest sort of men, not only in the scholar's art, but also in the art of healing or in the art of navigating. These arts, however, make no profession of greatness of soul; they do not rise to any heights nor do they frown upon what fortune may bring . . . Money tumbles into the hands of certain men as a coin tumbles down a sewer. Virtue stands above all such things. It is appraised in a coin of its own minting; and it deems none of these random windfalls to be good. But medicine and navigation do not forbid themselves and their followers to marvel at such things" (trans. Gummere, with minor changes).

expressed in the performance itself.³⁴⁸ There is no further, external result that can plausibly be said to confer value on the virtuoso performance of an actor or dancer, nor one towards which her motivations are appropriately directed.³⁴⁹ As Frede remarks, this feature sharply distinguishes the Stoic theory from instrumental accounts of rationality.

5.6 Stoic reason

We are now in position, perhaps, to distinguish some of the central features of the Stoic conception of practical reason. We might fairly say that the Stoic view is (1) *monistic* in the sense of recognizing but one single source of practical reasons. Not only does the Stoic view eliminate the possibility of conflict between eudaimonist and non-eudaimonist considerations, it would appear to eliminate the possibility of conflicting requirements within happiness as well. The rational Stoic agent aims to conform to the single pattern of events orchestrated by Zeus. Because she cannot foresee every eventuality, her virtue depends on a reasonable attempt to conform to this pattern given the knowledge available to her. The practical reasons she has will uniformly favor whatever course of action the balance of her epistemic reasons supports. We might also say that the Stoic view is (2) *externalist*. In claiming that motivating states are cognitive states whose rationality depends on a true and reliable representation of the world, the Stoic theory rejects the central contentions of a

³⁴⁸ See *Fin.* 3.32; Epictetus, *Diss.*, 4.1.108; Mar. Ant., *Med.*, 11.1. Cf. E. Sosa, *A Virtue Epistemology* (Oxford, 2007), 80: "Epistemology too, like the aesthetics of dance, reverses the import of causality found in instrumental value. The distinctively epistemic evaluation of a cognitive performance can depend substantially on its source, unlike the instrumental evaluation that depends on effects rather than sources."

³⁴⁹ Cf. Mar. Ant., *Med.*, 11.1: "The properties of the rational soul are these: it sees itself, dissects itself, moulds itself to its own will, itself reaps its own fruits . . . it wins its own goal wherever the bounds of life be set. In dancing and acting and such-like arts, if a break occurs, the whole action is rendered imperfect; but the rational soul in every part and wheresoever taken shews the work set before it fulfilled and all-sufficient for itself, so that it can say: I have to the full what is my own." (trans. Haines)

Humean account of practical reason. The rationality of motivational states is to be explained by their representational fit with the world, not the other way around.

The Stoic conception of reason might further be characterized as (3) *agent-relational*. There are no grounds for supposing that the Stoics recognize agent-neutral reasons of the form a theory such as Nagel's requires. Since the Stoic account makes rational justification relative to the agent's own good, it makes reference to the agent essential to the project of rational justification. Stoic rationality is also (4) *prudential* in that the Stoics insist on identifying the good with what is beneficial for the agent. Though this conception does not accommodate the controversial "pure altruism" of Nagel or endorse the problematic ethical neutralism described by Broad, it is nevertheless impartial insofar as it is (5) *universal* in scope. The Stoics recognize the moral claim that others have on us, no matter how removed they may be. Finally, we might say that the Stoic account is (6) *substantive* rather than formal. The Stoics do not attempt to ground the rationality of action in formal, *a priori* features of rationality but in a rational pattern expressed in nature and grasped by experience.

Stoic ethics has been criticized by both ancient and contemporary commentators as a paradoxical theory, endorsing doctrines far removed from common sense. It is rather striking, however, to note how many central features of the Stoic account remain defensible today. Though the Stoic theory combines the features I have identified in distinctive ways, most (if not all) of them have contemporary defenders. It is also worth noting that the Stoics' claim to offer a *prudential* account is perhaps the most assailed point of Stoic doctrine. Though we ought to recognize that the Stoics regard their own theory as a prudential one, rooted in a conception of well-being, we might also conclude, with Hurka, that ancient accounts of *eudaimonia* do

not satisfy a plausible conception of human welfare.³⁵⁰ Once this granted, however, what remains is an intricate and innovative account of practical reason.

5.7 Conclusion

Many objections have been made against ethical theories that attempt to argue, as the Stoic theory does, from essential features of human nature to particular conclusions about how humans should act. Bernard Williams has catalogued some of these:

There are more general objections to the procedure of trying to elicit unquestionable moral end or ideals from distinguishing marks of man's nature. We may mention three. First, a palpable degree of evaluation has already gone into the selection of the distinguishing mark which is given this role, such as rationality or creativity. If one approached without preconceptions the question of finding characteristics which differentiate men from other animals, one could as well, on these principles, end up with a morality which exhorted men to spend as much time as possible in making fire; or developing peculiarly human physical characteristics; . . . or killing things for fun. Second, and very basically, this approach bears out the moral *ambiguity* of distinctive human characteristics (though Aristotle paid some attention, not totally successfully, to this point). For if it is a mark of a man to employ intelligence and tools in modifying his environment, it is equally a mark of him to employ intelligence in getting his own way and tools in destroying others . . . Third, if we revert to that particular case of the *rational* as the distinguishing mark of man; there is a tendency for this approach to . . . emphasize virtues of rational self-control at the expense of all else . . . If rationality and consistent thought are the preferred distinguishing marks of man, then, even if it is admitted that man, as a whole, also has passions, the supremacy of rational thought over them may well seem an unquestionable idea. This is all the more so, since it is quite obvious that gaining some such control is a basic condition of growing up, and even, at the extreme, of sanity. But to move from that into making such control into the ideal, rules out *a priori* most forms of spontaneity. And this seems to be absurd.³⁵¹

³⁵⁰ See T. Hurka, *Perfectionism* (Oxford, 1993).

³⁵¹ Williams, *Morality* (New York, 1972), 75-77.

There is no space here for even a cursory assessment of Stoic ethics. But since Williams may appear to have something along the lines of the Stoic theory in mind, it is worth considering briefly how the Stoics might reply to the objections he singles out. The first objection seems not to apply, since the Stoics are quite explicit about the need for ethical preconceptions, and nowhere do they suggest that the specific content of the virtues can be filled in by an appeal to uncontroversial facts about human or cosmic nature alone. Yet these virtues are a matter of nature (*phusis*), not supposition (*thesis*), in the Stoic view, because they depend on truth-evaluable claims about what is appropriate to rational beings in community with one another.³⁵²

William's second objection would apply to the Stoics if they endeavored to deduce specific ethical claims from empirical claims about nature. But though they clearly hold that ethical propositions are true or false in virtue of natural facts, it doesn't follow that they attempt to *deduce* or *derive* specific ethical conclusions from disputed claims about the natural order. Here again ethical preconceptions may play a vital role. The Stoics' primary aim in appealing to human nature is to establish that, as Williams helpfully suggests, a naturalistic account of the human end endorses the use of rationality in determining what one ought to do. But the Stoics are free to appeal to ethical preconceptions to articulate the details of moral requirements. To Williams's third objection the Stoics would doubtless reply "quite", as they did to their ancient critics. They are perfectly happy to revert to the particular case of rationality as the distinguishing mark of human nature, and they might also ask why the endorsement of spontaneity provides a general constraint on an ethical theory that is not absurd.

These considerations help to bring out the originality and sophistication of the Stoic account. The Stoics argue for an ethics broadly rooted in a conception of rational human nature but which is also free to appeal to other considerations. The

³⁵² Stob., *Ecl.* 2.94, SVF 3.611.

fragmentary remains of Stoic doctrine suggest that Chrysippus appealed to very general features of animal and human behavior to show that right action depends on a correct conception of oneself in relation to the world. He appealed to specific theses in the Stoic theory of action to show that, in the human case, these considerations support a cognitive account of virtue and a monistic account of the human good. It is unwise, as Williams emphasizes, to attempt a narrow deduction of the particular ends proper to rational agents without the help of generally accepted ethical principles, and this Stoic theory does not appear to do. But it does argue that, whatever those principles may be, they are grasped through the perfected use of the rational faculty that distinguishes human beings from non-rational animals.

However this account is ultimately to be judged, it is hard to deny the elegance of its central claims. If you want to achieve your end, in which human happiness consists, do what every other animal by nature does: make a true assessment of the duties appropriate to a rational being in the station in which you find yourself. Disallow error from undermining this assessment by distinguishing among reliable and unreliable impressions. Do this perfectly, and you cannot fail to make the selections appropriate to your rational nature. Do it firmly and consistently, and your selections become choices that realize the virtue implicit in nature's design. You will also, the Stoics believe, perceive in that pattern of conduct the source of virtue's value, an expression of rational agency that, rather like a jewel, reflects the order of the cosmos as a whole.

APPENDIX: WHITE ON STOIC *oikeiōsis*

Since I have here characterized the Stoic view as perfectionist, it is worth briefly considering an article in which Nicholas White explicitly challenges that claim.³⁵³ White agrees that *oikeiōsis* played a central role in the ethical theory of the early Stoics and in that of Chrysippus in particular, but he sharply distinguishes the Stoic view transmitted in *De finibus* Three from the Antiochean and New Academic accounts presented in books Four and Five. White begins with a discussion of Pohlenz's lengthy study of *oikeiōsis* and, borrowing a term from Sidgwick, characterizes Pohlenz's account as a broadly Aristotelian, "self-realizationist" view. According to White, a view of this sort "fixes upon certain features of a human being that are thought to constitute its somehow essential nature and urges that those features be developed".³⁵⁴

If, contra White, we accept this formulation as an accurate account of Stoic *oikeiōsis*, then the Antiochean account differs from the Stoic argument not so much in its claims about the structure of the *oikeiōsis* argument but in its characterization of what is essential in human nature. In particular, Antiochus rejects the monistic, rational conception of human nature accepted by the Stoics, distinguishing bodily nature and its corresponding needs from rational nature. The Antiochean account of *oikeiōsis* traces at each successive stage of maturation a dualistic development of the human being answering to the impulses of both body and soul.³⁵⁵ On Pohlenz's reading of the sources, Antiochus thus remains a reliable resource for recording the aim and structure of the *oikeiōsis* argument as a whole: the argument's output--a refined account of a creature's *telos*--is more or less a function of its input, a characterization of a creature's essential nature. On this view both schools agree on

³⁵³ See N. White, 'Basis'.

³⁵⁴ White, *ibid.*, 146

³⁵⁵ This point is emphasized in B. Inwood, 'Comments'.

the structure and soundness of ethical appeals to *oikeiōsis* but disagree on the correct way to characterize human nature.

White raises difficulties for this view. Arguing on the basis of important differences between the accounts offered in *De finibus* Three and those of Books Four and Five, he shows that much of Pohlenz's analysis of *oikeiōsis* rests on Antiochean material. But White draws the further conclusion that Antiochus has not even accurately preserved the basic form of the Stoic argument. In particular, he notes (1) that Book Three makes no mention of the "desire for perfection of one's parts and of oneself as a whole" and (2) the absence in Book Three of any directive to "determine what the nature of man is".³⁵⁶ Moreover, White attributes to Book Three "a crucial idea entirely lacking in the doctrine of Antiochus", namely, the supreme regard for the *rerum agendarum ordinem et concordiam*, which constitutes the highest good and is to be sought *propter se*: "By clear and emphatic contrast, this theme of order and harmony is not a part of the argument in Book Five, either in the discussions of the virtues or in the account of human nature".³⁵⁷ White further supports this conclusion with a discussion of Pohlenz's claims about early Stoic views of the human *telos*, emphasizing the fact that the formulation of the end attributed to Zeno by Diogenes Laertius is *homologoumenos tēi phusei zēn*, a formula that, according to White, fits closely with the notion of order and consistency prominent in Cicero's Book Three account. On these grounds White concludes that the account presented in *De finibus* Three represents a view that is substantially closer to the original doctrines of Chrysippus, while later accounts represent Antiochean distortions: "we are left without

³⁵⁶ White, 153

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 159

any good reason to think that Zeno developed his view of the *telos* from, or grounded it upon, a claim about the specific nature of human beings”.³⁵⁸

White’s argument certainly marks a distinct contrast of emphasis between the account of *De finibus* Three and those of Books Four and Five.³⁵⁹ Yet even if these contrasts reflect basic differences in Cicero’s source material, it is difficult to see how they could represent a substantive difference between what White calls a “self-realizationist view” and the argument of *De finibus* Three. Antiochus is usually supposed to have taken over the *oikeiōsis* argument from the Stoics, and the Book Three argument is at least compatible with the Antiochean accounts in structure, if not in its specific conclusions. Moreover, White’s stronger claim that early Stoic views of the *telos* and the accompanying arguments from *oikeiōsis* were not based on claims about human nature is difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile with evidence independent of Cicero. In his summary of Diogenes Laertius, for instance, White neglects to mention the fact that Zeno’s *homologoumenos* formulation of the end is explicitly attributed to his work, *On the Human Telos*.

Such an attribution makes it unlikely that Zeno’s formulation took as little account of human nature as White suggests. Indeed, it is hard to see how any doctrine purporting to offer an explication of the *human telos* could ignore the essential features of human nature. To suggest that the Stoic account is not a “self-realizationist” view at all appears to undermine any intelligible account of the Stoics’

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 173. It is worth noting, perhaps, that White’s view of the development of Stoic ethics is more or less the contrary of that proposed by Annas. Though both share the assumption that the ideals of human and cosmic nature are in tension within the Stoic view, on Annas’s version the Stoic emphasis on the order of cosmic nature is a later accretion and largely inessential to a defense of Stoic ethics. On White’s view, cosmic nature figures prominently in the early, orthodox doctrines, whereas Panaetius is probably responsible for a later focus on human nature in particular. Neither of these readings seems to do full justice to the evidence. The part-whole doctrine that several sources prominently attribute to Chrysippus suggests that both accounts of nature were integrated in Stoic doctrine from early on.

³⁵⁹ White omits to mention Cato’s remark that rival philosophical systems *non modo nihil adiuuare arbitror neque afferre quo meliores simus, sed ipsam depravare naturam* (*Fin.* 3.11). Here *natura* must mean human nature, since it is capable of being corrupted by bad philosophy. The Stoic system, by implication, improves it.

developmental argument, which clearly does make use of at least some empirical claims about properties specific to human nature. To concede that the relevant properties with which *oikeiōsis* is concerned are non-essential ones cripples the Stoic argument from the outset. Moreover, since Chrysippus seems clearly to have denied the possibility of conflict between human nature and the ends determined by the cosmos, the Stoic version of *oikeiōsis* does seem to conform to White's description of a self-realizationist account, even when considered independently of the Antiochean material.³⁶⁰

Still, it might be supposed that the uniquely Stoic concern for order and harmony which characterizes the latter stages of *oikeiōsis* in *De finibus* Three marks some sort of departure from the "essential features" of human nature, and White perhaps has this in mind in noting the absence of this concern in the Antiochean accounts. But while the Stoics clearly believe that the advent of virtue in humans involves a recognition of order and harmony for their own sakes, this is not presented as an abandonment of human nature but as a development continuous with the motivations of earlier stages. The Stoics are anxious to show that delight in the employment of reason is characteristic of human behavior even in children. Unless they were prepared to deny a connection between a creature's *telos* and its essential nature, they too must have seen in the latter stages of *oikeiōsis* the perfection of essentially human capacities.

Thus although White is certainly correct to point out that the account of *De finibus* Three does not emphasize the perfection of specifically human nature to the same extent as the accounts of *De finibus* Four and Five, this point seems insufficient

³⁶⁰ In fairness, White later concedes as much: "Rather he [Chrysippus] actually identified a "consistent" human life, viewed as a life in accordance with human reason, with a life in accordance with nature as a whole, so that living in accordance with human nature and living in accordance with the plan and organization of the universe simply came to the same thing" (175). This eventual concession makes it difficult to understand some of White's earlier criticisms of Pohlenz.

to show that the latter books seriously misrepresent the basic structure of the Stoic argument. The rational concern for the *rerum agendarum ordinem* evident in the Stoic view is consistent with an account that purports to describe the ideal development of essential human nature, and Cicero's use of the gerundive confirms a connection with human conduct in particular.

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