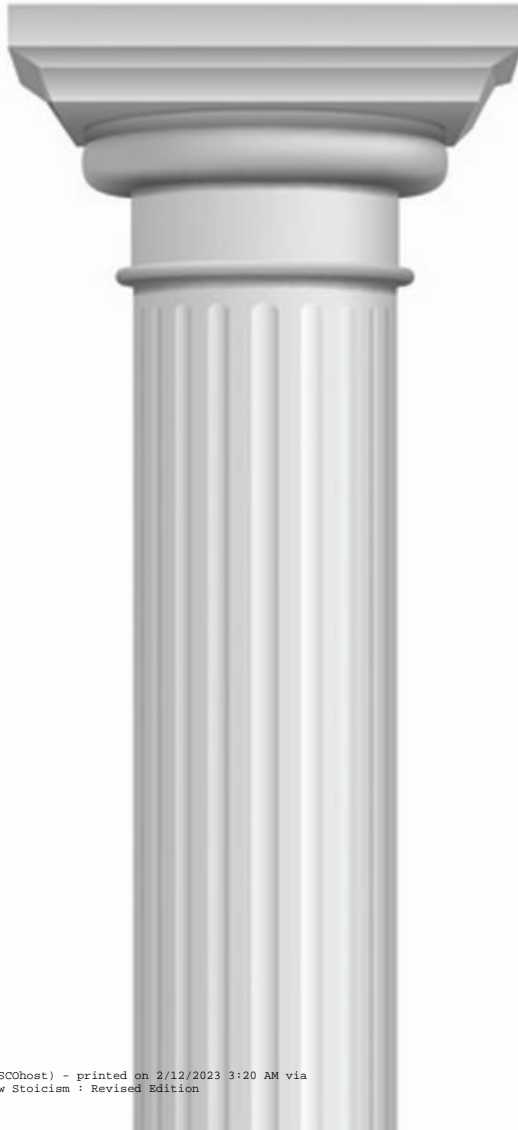


Lawrence C. Becker

A NEW
STOICISM
REVISED EDITION



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A NEW STOICISM

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REVISED EDITION

Lawrence C. Becker

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For Charlotte _____

AGAIN AND ALWAYS

THESE FIFTY YEARS

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Preface to the Revised Edition

Comparisons

Readers of the first edition (1998) will find that the overall project of the book remains the same, as do all its central philosophical claims, as well as the structure of the arguments for those claims. But there are five substantial changes.

THE FIRST is the reformulation of the relationships among stoic agency, virtue, and *eudaimonia* (happiness in the sense of a good life, a flourishing life). That change is stated in the new first section of chapter 6 and further explained in the new opening section of the commentary to that chapter. This has forced subtle and not so subtle changes throughout the book concerning the “final end” or ultimate goal in stoicism. It may be worthwhile to preview them here.

The reason for the change. The ancient Stoics claimed to be working in the eudaimonistic tradition but also claimed that virtue was the only good. Critics have persistently argued that these two claims are inconsistent. The critics point out that happiness is the final end, or ultimate goal, in the eudaimonistic tradition. How can the final end not itself be a good? And if it is a good, it is inconsistent for Stoics to say that virtue is the *only* good and at the same time claim to be eudaimonists.

In reply, the ancient Stoics never wavered in their claim that virtue was the only good but went on to emphasize that it was sufficient for happiness and, when pressed, would sometimes say that the two were identical, or perhaps inseparable in some sense. Even critics sympathetic to Stoicism in other respects refused to accept this response. Cicero is an example.

The first edition took the ancient Stoics at their word about virtue being the only good and tried to make the best of it by identifying virtue not with happiness but with ideal agency, which can plausibly be understood as something that is sufficient by itself to generate something resembling happiness. Thus, as the text of the first edition put it, in stoicism the final end or ultimate good is virtue and *not* happiness—although virtuous agentic activity yields happiness. But this just resurrects, rather than resolves, the “two goods” problem and is unsatisfactory for other reasons as well.

The change itself. The account of the matter in this edition is a decided improvement in the sense that it leaves no doubt that stoicism is firmly

within the eudaimonistic tradition. The revised account begins by pointing out that the same developmental process simultaneously yields three distinct things: ideal stoic agency, stoic virtue, and happiness in the sense of the stoic form of eudaimonia. Ideal stoic agency is necessary and sufficient for achieving and sustaining stoic virtue (the only good), which is in turn necessary and sufficient for producing stoic happiness—the terminus of questions about what we expect to get from stoic virtue, beyond being and acting virtuously for its own sake, and for the sake of others. Those three things are inseparable because, given their common developmental source, it is not possible to have one of the three things without also having the other two. If you have ideal stoic agency, you are going to get stoic virtue and stoic happiness as well. Stoic happiness, however, like happiness in other forms of eudaimonism, puts an end to questions about why we should develop agency and virtue. In that sense, though virtue remains the only good for Stoics, happiness is the final end.

A bonus from the change. If agency, virtue, and happiness are inseparable, a person who is making progress toward ideal stoic agency is clearly making progress toward virtue and happiness as well. This helps to understand another controversial doctrine in ancient Stoicism—namely, the claim that virtue is an all or nothing thing. The ancient Stoics claimed that virtue itself could not be a matter of degree. *Progress* toward virtue is a different matter, however, and that is why they presumably emphasized it so much, even coining a technical term for a person making such progress (*prokoptôn*). Such progress can be assessed in terms of degrees of nearness to virtue itself. (An obvious analogy is uniqueness, which is also an all or nothing thing. Things that are not unique can nonetheless be far from it, close to it, or very close to it.) The first edition appreciated this point fully with respect to happiness. The assumption throughout chapter 7 was, and remains, that imperfect stoic moral agents will have more or less unstable forms of stoic virtue and happiness. There is now a more explicit discussion of progress toward virtue, however, to make the point clearer.

THE SECOND substantial change is the acknowledgment that specifically stoic moral training and education must figure prominently, at some stage, in the developmental story told in chapters 5 and 6. As a consequence, the ancient texts that focus on it (from Epictetus and Seneca, for example) provide indispensable ancient sources. This new material is also in chapter 6, under various obvious headings, and references to relevant works are in the first section of the commentary to chapter 6. Since the book itself is on stoic ethical *theory*, this change does not have very wide reverberations throughout the text or commentaries, but it is important nonetheless. There is no attempt to give a detailed account of stoic moral education, but there are remarks in the postscript about some possibilities for stoic teaching, training, and therapy.

THE THIRD substantial change is a response to readers of the first edition who were puzzled by the omission of the topic of suicide—a notorious part of ancient Stoic ethics. There is now a discussion of it in a new section of chapter 7 called “A Good Life.” That section summarizes the inferences one can make from material in the earlier chapters on a number of topics: a good birth, a good life, a good death, suicide, and assisted suicide. These inferences lead to much the same conclusions as one finds in the ancient Stoic texts on all those matters. There are also, now, some accompanying remarks and ancient texts regarding suicide in the commentary to chapter 7.

THE FOURTH substantial change is the fact that this revised edition has updated the book in response to the remarkable growth of scholarly publication and general intellectual interest in Stoic ethics since 1998. Substantive additions can be found at the following places.

Updated bibliography and commentary. Readers will find mentions—and in some places discussions—of some important new translations of classic texts, new scholarly discussions of Hellenistic and Roman Stoicism, and stoic themes throughout the subsequent history of Western philosophy. Specifically, there are such changes in the commentary to chapter 3, under the headings “Reconstructed texts,” “Initial influences,” “The reception of Stoicism,” “Debates within the Stoic school,” “Contemporary sources,” and “Stoic holism and the autonomy of ethics.” The current revival of interest in stoic accounts of living well and engagement in stoic practices is treated in the postscript. The works mentioned have complete citations in the new bibliography.

Improved arguments. There are some other changes of note. Not the least of these is the attempt to make chapters 4, 5, and 6 more reader friendly by breaking up some extraordinarily long paragraphs, adding new subsection headings, and generally making the text less like something from the age before writers used punctuation.

There are also some restatements of elements in the book’s arguments themselves. In some cases these are quite brief; in others, not brief at all. They are flagged here for the benefit of readers who want to identify them easily:

- on scientific knowledge (remarks in the commentary to chapter 3 under “Physics, logic, and ethics”);
- on naturalism and the move from is to ought (the arguments are now previewed below in this preface; the original material remains in chapter 4 under a heading that now calls attention to it: “Normative Constructs: Getting from Is to Ought”);
- on determinism and human freedom (the restated material is in chapter 5 under “Agency makes a difference in the deterministic story”);

- on the relation between the virtues and virtue-in-the-singular (there is added material now in chapter 6 under the heading “From Ideal Stoic Agency to Stoic Virtue”);
- on healthy agency and stoic virtue (added remarks in chapter 6, “Healthy Agency: Complexity, Development toward Virtue”);
- on stoic moral education (added remarks in chapter 6 under “Moral Education and Divergent Paths to Virtue”) and at various indexed references throughout the text;
- on the development of practical intelligence into practical wisdom (remarks in chapter 6 under “Comprehensive fitness and commonsense practical wisdom”);
- on stoic emotion (new material in the commentary to chapter 7, under the headings “Stoic emotion,” “Virtue and tranquility,” and “Virtue and love”).

THE FIFTH and final important change is the postscript. It has substantial new material on three additional topics that do not fit naturally into the text of the book itself, or into this preface. One of these topics is whether stoic virtue ethics can take a more prominent role as a foundation for virtue ethics generally. Another is about stoic politics, justice, and the relevance of stoic ethical theory to social and political philosophy. The third is about the recent growth in interest in stoicism as a practical guide to living well and its relation to the project of *A New Stoicism*.

Preemptive Disarmament

Gore Vidal once opened a scathing book review by saying (roughly) that although the purpose of every author’s introduction is to disarm readers, unfortunately the one he was reading armed him to the teeth. Something similar could happen with what follows, but nearly twenty years of intermittent conversation and correspondence with the readers of *A New Stoicism* suggests the need for adding some preemptive comments on a few things. An example is the book’s opening literary conceit and its use of the deliberately distorted fictional history of a saving remnant of stoics throughout the ages. This need not be annoying if it is not a surprise, so it remains unchanged in this new edition. But it calls for some preemptory explanation.

An imagined history. The question that guided the writing of the book was this: what would Stoic ethics be like today if Stoicism had had a continuous history from its origins in Hellenistic Athens to the present? In that imagined history, Stoic philosophy would presumably have continued to develop, as it did throughout its first five hundred years, through vigorous debate among its adherents, and in debates with its philosophical

adversaries. Through a continuing succession of leading philosophers, it would have continued to make contributions to various aspects of its original systematic program in physics, logic, and ethics—as the ancients understood those terms.

In the most plausible version of this imagined history, such Stoics would have introduced some changes in their basic doctrines—changes equivalent in significance to the transformative ones that they introduced repeatedly during the first five hundred years. After all, stoicism is philosophy, and philosophy as a whole continued to change profoundly during the medieval, Renaissance, modern, and contemporary eras. Much of what the Stoics called physics, for example, which was then understood as part of their philosophy, has become a set of separate sciences that have borders with contemporary philosophy but are no longer parts of it. The question is whether those changes would have left modern stoics with anything that is similar enough to ancient Stoicism to be considered a new version of it.

A New Stoicism argues that Stoic virtue ethics could have remained largely the same. It could still be thoroughly naturalistic and committed to scientifically established beliefs in what we call the natural sciences, the social sciences, medicine, and psychology. So its central motto of living in accord with nature could remain intact today, and its moral psychology could be largely intact as well. And that is enough, as the first edition showed, to leave intact almost all the central doctrines of Stoic ethics, when they are appropriately restated.

But one thing that cannot remain intact is ancient Stoic cosmology and the theology derived from it. Some stoics in this (imaginary) continuing history could have continued to support the ancient views on those things, despite the fact that it would not be consistent with modern science. Modern philosophy would have subjected them to withering criticism—leaving Stoic natural theology dramatically changed at the very least, or perhaps redefined as a form of faith independent of modern physics and cosmology. Either way, Stoic philosophy would be driven away from its ancient theology, and the Stoic system as a whole would be transformed. This is a disappointment, because the picture of the universe ancient Stoics presented us with—the picture of the universe as a gigantic rational organism, providential toward us, and in whose rationality we all share—is still beautiful and inspiring to many people today. It was also functional, for most ancient Stoics, as a sustaining support for their ethical theory and moral practice. So we should not abandon it casually.

Nonetheless, would it be inspiring to imagine a contemporary sect of Stoic theologians who somehow reject or reinterpret contemporary astronomy, astrophysics, astro-chemistry, and cosmological physics—not to mention evolutionary biology—in order to hang on to their theology?

It is not inspiring to me. But contemporary science is inspiring in its own way. So, in this imaginary history, modern stoics eventually reject the ancient Stoic conception of a providential god. It takes them a long time to do it, of course. In that respect, they do not diverge significantly from the historical course of Western philosophy as a whole.

The actual history of Stoicism. The generally accepted history of the Stoic school outlined in the commentaries to the chapters of the first edition (beginning with the commentary to chapter 3) is roughly this: Stoicism as a recognizable school or collection of affiliated philosophers effectively ended in the late second or early third century of the Common Era. After that, it remained an influence—sometimes an important influence—in the background. Some Stoic ideas were incorporated into ongoing strands of philosophy or theology, especially perhaps in early Christianity of the Augustinian sort. Sometimes an isolated individual philosopher—e.g., Boethius—would bring Stoic accounts of virtue, tranquility, a happy life, or moral duty into the foreground. But just as often that same philosopher would refuse to endorse Stoic ethical theory in a systematic, naturalistic way, let alone endorse Stoic cosmology and theology. Things changed significantly during the Renaissance, given the recovery of many ancient texts and their translation into Latin. And there was even a century of explicit, heavily Christianized neo-Stoicism during the turmoil of the Reformation—roughly from the 1580s to the 1680s. But there was also a concurrent and successful backlash against it then. And of course Christian theologians always replaced Stoic cosmology and theology with their own, and appropriated at least as much from Plato and Aristotle as from the Stoics.

Aside from that, it is hard to find philosophers from the early modern period onward who identify themselves as Stoics—even as they express admiration for some aspects of Stoicism and either explicitly adopt them or put forward similar ideas of their own. On all this, however, see the valuable material throughout *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics* (2003), edited by Brad Inwood, and *The Routledge Handbook of the Stoic Tradition* (2016), edited by John Sellars. The story of the reception of Stoic philosophy, after its death as a recognizable school, is complex, as those anthologies show. But its historical influence on Western philosophy has been continuous and widespread.

Spotting the influence of Stoicism in philosophers who either denied or did not fully acknowledge its presence in their work is important. But working those philosophers into the argumentative project here is difficult. Spinoza is a good example. There are certainly some similarities between his philosophical system and that of the Stoics. See the recent study of the similarities and dissimilarities in Jon Miller's *Spinoza and the Stoics* (2015), and his article on Spinoza in the *Routledge Handbook of*

the Stoic Tradition. So it is possible, initially, to see an opportunity in the fact that Spinoza, too, discarded the providential aspect of Stoic theology (if he was thinking about Stoic theology at all) but replaced its concept of god with a grand, nonprovidential one of his own. That could conceivably work for a new stoicism, and gain some cosmological support for making progress toward stoic virtue.

But Spinoza all but denied that he was working in the Stoic tradition. Perhaps we should take him at his word. That would not prevent us from following his lead, of course. But I myself could not imagine how to fit the massive edifice of his work and its conception of god into the book I wanted to write. It would be fascinating to read someone else's book that managed to build up a different version of ethical theory in a new stoicism from Spinoza's work. And the same is true for books that might bring in Shaftesbury in a major way. That sort of variety within modern stoicism would be all to the good. In fact, it might make a valuable contribution to ethical theory as a whole, by way of virtue ethics. See the discussion of virtue ethics in the postscript.

Can stoic ethics get from the descriptive "is" to the moral "ought"? Yes. This is clear enough in the text but is buried in some otherwise dense arguments. So it seems appropriate to restate it here.

For practical purposes, which is what counts in ethics, the is/ought gap is bridged in this way: Each of the virtues and vices (courage and cowardice, kindness and cruelty, etc.) is a complex, dispositional endeavor that generates goals in relevant situations. Each of those goals yields hypothetical imperatives of the form "If you are going for goal X, then you ought to do Y." The antecedent "if" clause is descriptive, and the consequent "then" clause is prescriptive. That is the way we get from an "is" to a *nonmoral*, purely practical "ought." The analogy is to giving prescriptive advice for playing a game. (Do you want to win this game? Then take White's bishop now.) That is how it looks for purely practical or prudential advice, nothing else considered. No one supposes there is a logical gap between is and ought in those cases.

We can get to a *moral* "ought" when we are working with similar if-then statements *all things considered* in the following way: if each of the virtues and their emergent goals are all integrated and made coherent by practical wisdom when it is pointed toward a single controlling goal—namely, making progress toward virtue in the singular—then the goal of pursuing virtue itself generates a controlling hypothetical imperative in each case. As Philippa Foot (1972) once put it in a famous paper, morality is a *system* of hypothetical imperatives. And if the controlling hypothetical imperatives are generated by practical wisdom operating all-things-considered, then someone else might continue to reply to Foot that such imperatives have the finality we expect in moral judgments

(Becker 1973). Once we reach them, there is nothing more to consider. The antecedent “if” clause drops out with inferences of an elementary valid form: if A, then C; and A; therefore C. We simply ought to do what the C prescribes. This holds categorically unless and until the relevant circumstances change in ways that require reconsideration. That sensitivity to change is a good thing, and it is thoroughly consistent with any naturalistic moral theory.

This is just a compressed and restated outline. A more detailed account can be found in the thickets of chapters 4 and 5, and the somewhat clearer fields of chapter 6.

We Stoics. The literary conceit that opens *A New Stoicism* is in the first-person plural for rhetorical purposes. And also for rhetorical purposes the conceit deliberately distorts the generally accepted history of medieval and modern Stoicism. That distortion is confined to the conceit. Out of respect for the ancients I use the term stoicism in lowercase letters throughout the book to distinguish modern forms of it (including but not limited to the one I endorse) from the ancient Stoics. And “we stoics” is also used out of respect for the many scholars who have spent so much of their intellectual labor throughout the ages to preserve, interpret, and translate Stoic texts for the benefit of all—Stoics, stoics, and nonstoics alike.

Lawrence C. Becker
January 2017

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Part One ---

THE WAY THINGS STAND

The Conceit

AFTER FIVE hundred years of prominence in Greek and Roman antiquity, Stoic ethics was pillaged by theology and effaced by evangelical and imperial Christianity. A few Stoic philosophers survived, most of them by providing analgesics for use in pastoral counseling, the military, and what then passed for medicine and psychotherapy. Only those shards of our doctrines were widely seen during the Middle Ages, and the term Stoic came to be applied merely to people who used our remedies. This confusion persists.

In the Italian Renaissance there was a brief effusion of interest in our historical roots, and some of us were emboldened to publish the work we were then doing. A living philosophical tradition changes, and Renaissance neostoicism, as it is now called, quite naturally bore only a strong family resemblance to that of Zeno and Chrysippus. This wider interest in our views soon dwindled, however, and in still smaller numbers we again went back to private practice. A few major figures in modern philosophy continued to use our doctrines in their ethical theories, typically without attribution, and just as typically denounced us for good measure.

Modern science presented significant challenges to our metaphysical views, and during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries we gradually abandoned our doctrine that the universe should be understood as a purposive, rational being. With that, we lost contact with theology of all sorts. Moreover, we continued to organize ethical theory along eudaimonistic lines and thus lost contact with the secular side of moral philosophy as well, mobbed as it was (and is) by people clamoring for a priori principles, sentiment, commonsense virtues, utility, rights, duties, and justice in contractual arrangements. Our obliteration began in this period, with the emergence of claims for the autonomy of ethics.

Even our analgesics were discarded in the nineteenth century, largely due to the rise of romanticism. This Barmecidal substitute for religious fervor was (and in its current decadence still is) contemptuous of stoic moral training. But it was philosophy in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries that finally laid waste to our project—not in direct attacks on stoicism's intellectual merit but in a blizzard of fads that undermined commitments to reason and nature. The social sciences bought the fact-value distinction, and philosophy peddled it to them. Nonnaturalism arose, collapsed into noncognitivism, and rose again as intuitionism and

constructivism. Moral truth was given a coherentist interpretation. Pluralism, relativism, and irony abounded, alongside various forms of dogmatism about natural duties and the intrinsic moral worth of human beings.

Only three small groups will now say anything in our favor. Some soldiers, actual or spiritual, still prefer our psychotherapy to morphine and mood enhancers. Logicians appreciate our early work on the propositional calculus. Hellenists admire the Stoics of antiquity and argue that their ethical doctrines were not (for their time) foolish.

It is a complete disaster. Only a few are escaped to tell you.

A New Agenda for Stoic Ethics

IN ACADEMIC philosophy, Stoicism has long been identified with a discredited form of naturalistic ethics—one in which the supreme principle is “follow nature.” The ancient Stoics apparently believed that nature was a teleological system—a vast goal-oriented entity. They apparently believed that within this vast entity, and with respect to its goal or end, humans had a discoverable role, both as a species and as individuals. And they apparently believed that following out one’s natural role, immunized so as to be able to live contentedly whatever one’s circumstances, was demonstrably the right way to conduct one’s life.

These beliefs are now widely thought to be flagrant and uninteresting errors—errors that make Stoic ethics wholly insupportable. Thus philosophers generally relegate serious work on Stoicism to experts on Hellenistic philosophy, regard the medicinal properties of Stoic training as mere placebo effects, and reject the ideal of the Stoic sage (contentedly accepting her assigned role, immune from most suffering and able to endure the remainder) in the same gesture that dismisses tranquilizers and prefrontal lobotomies as means to a good life.

But suppose there were a book about virtue, happiness, and the good life that identified them all with living well—that is, with excelling or flourishing in terms of the available resources. Suppose this book were to argue that living well in that sense was the product of following the final, all-things-considered normative propositions of practical reason, and that those normative propositions could not be constructed a priori but rather depended crucially on the fullest available knowledge of the natural world. Suppose the construction of those propositions always began in the particular—with what is possible for a particular agent with a particular history, character, and range of choices; that such particulars were generalized only to the extent that agents had a common history, nature, and situation. Suppose those propositions were rarely egoistic, in the sense of ratifying the agent’s narrow self-interest, but rather that in typical cases following them meant realigning or overriding many of one’s dearest wishes. Suppose the book described a character-building regime for this purpose, emphasizing control of one’s mental states as a means of overcoming obstacles to living well. And suppose the book made clear how natural endowments and circumstances determined whether living well was compatible with intense longing, passionate commitments, grand

gestures, reckless adventure—or whether it always required the colorless, cautious existence described in contemptuous essays on Stoicism.

That book would be in the Stoic tradition, in the sense that it put forward a cluster of doctrines traceable to central elements of classical Stoic ethics. It would be eudaimonistic, in identifying the good life or happiness with flourishing—with being excellent-of-one's-kind. It would be intellectualistic, in identifying virtue with rationality—with carrying out the normative propositions of practical reason and wisdom. It would be naturalistic, in its insistence that facts about the natural world were the substance of practical deliberation. And because the book would argue that virtuous conduct was always the same one thing (namely, conformity to practical reason and wisdom), the book, like the Stoics, would propound the formal unity of the virtues. Moreover, the book's focus on the full particularity of each agent could be seen as a remnant of the Stoic notion of a role for each of us in the grand system of nature. The emphasis on self-mastery would also be familiar.

Many ancient Stoic ideas would be missing, of course, and a major one would be cosmic *telos*—the notion that the natural world is a purposive system with an end or goal that practical reason directs us to follow. How could a book be a work of Stoic ethics without such a doctrine? How could it solve the is/ought problem without it, or give plausibility to the “follow nature” motto? It seems that the book cannot be a work of *Stoic* ethics without the cosmic teleology, but that it cannot be a credible work of ethics *with* such a cosmology. Yet it is interesting to try to imagine what might have happened if Stoicism had had a continuous twenty-three-hundred-year history; if Stoics had had to confront Bacon and Descartes, Newton and Locke, Hobbes and Bentham, Hume and Kant, Darwin and Marx, and the vicissitudes of ethics in the twentieth century. It is reasonable to suppose that Stoics would have found a way to reject teleological physics and biology when scientific consensus did; that they would have found ways to hold their own against the attacks on naturalism launched in the modern era. And it is reasonable to suppose that the sheer variety of self-identified Stoics over the centuries would have prevented, as it did in antiquity, the view that a Stoic life is typically a bleak one.

The book that follows is less ambitious than the one we have just imagined, but it is in the same line of work. It outlines a contemporary version of Stoic ethics, not a reconstruction of the ancient one. It does this in three steps: The first is a swift, largely declarative survey of the possibilities that remain open for stoicism (chapter 3). The second is a compressed but detailed presentation of the logic and general character of a Stoic form of naturalism (chapters 4 and 5). The third step is a schematic account of virtue and a good life, designed to address persistent prejudices about

Stoic doctrine (chapters 6 and 7). The book is thus neither a comprehensive ethical theory nor a practical handbook. It is rather an investigation of neglected possibilities, written by a stoic who is merely trying to show a skeptical audience that his ethical theory is philosophically viable.

A final warning label: this book is not an exposition or defense of ancient Stoic texts. It does, however, aim to explain itself to loyal readers of those texts (readers not themselves Stoics, which makes them all the more loyal to the texts). Such readers will want to know in detail how this work can justify calling itself stoic, and they will find such detail in commentaries appended to subsequent chapters. Hostile readers of the ancient texts—readers who find little in them worth admiring—will want to know why a revival of stoic ethics should even be attempted, and readers who are skeptical of brand-name ethics altogether will want to know whether a work on *stoic* ethics advances the enterprise of ethics, period. Chapter 3, including its commentary, is addressed to those dubious readers and will complete the introductory part of the book. Like any introduction, it is meant to encourage people to read further. It does not offer an overview of the book but rather aims to show that a philosophically respectable version of stoic ethics is both possible and interesting.

The Ruins of Doctrine

TO MANY OF our critics, it seems that what is defensible in stoic ethics is not unique to it, but merely a reprise of various ideas drawn from other ancient sources. What is uniquely stoic, they say, is only a collection of very peculiar and ultimately indefensible doctrines. We continue to hold most of those peculiar doctrines. We hold, for example, that the only thing that is good in itself is virtue; that virtue does not admit of degrees, but that progress toward it does; that sages are happy just because they are virtuous, and can be happy even on the rack; that they must be able to say of everything other than their virtue (friends, loves, emotions, reputation, wealth, pleasant mental states, suffering, disease, death, and so on) that when they are lost, it is nothing to them. All this and more we will recast and argue for in due course. We will also assume, and support more obliquely, some things that are not unique to stoic ethics but are nonetheless central to its project. Here, more in the form of announcement than of argument, are some of those assumptions, mixed with other preparations.

Science, Logic, and Ethics

Natural science no longer gives grand teleological explanations. Thus we cannot plausibly propose to “follow” nature, as the ancient motto had it. Yet for stoics, ethics remains subordinate to science and logic in a way that separates us from most other contemporary ethical theorists. Nonstoics now typically want to maintain a sharp distinction between science and ethics. In fact, it is commonplace in modern philosophy to hold some version of the thesis that ethics is an autonomous enterprise. There is wide agreement that ethics is independent of religion. (And we certainly concur.) Moreover, ethics is meant to be about what ought to be the case, not about what is the case, so it cannot simply *be* a science, as we now use that term, and many philosophers reject the notion that ethical truths can even be derived from facts about the world at all. Some follow (or perhaps misinterpret) Hume in holding that “ought” cannot be derived from “is.” Others follow Kant in rejecting the relevance of empirical knowledge altogether, at least for the foundations of ethics, by insisting that fundamental ethical truths are discoverable a priori.

Intuitionists reject all inference at the foundational level, insisting that the right (or the good) can be known immediately. And noncognitivists of various sorts insist that ethical judgments are linked to empirical truths only psychologically, not logically. Even those nonstoics who want to endorse the importance of empirical knowledge are not typically prepared to say more than (roughly) this:

Ethics is not a science; it is not descriptive, explanatory, predictive; not pursued by the experimental method. But beliefs about the natural world, human nature, social institutions, and psychological processes have an impact at the very foundations of ethics. Among such beliefs as might be held, it is scientific ones (rather than religious, cultural, or idiosyncratic ones) that ethics should use.

Ethics is not mathematics. There is no moral geometry that proceeds with deductive certainty from one necessary truth to another. Ethics is based on facts about the world and proceeds from one contingent truth to another. But among the ways we might proceed from truth to truth, it is those defined by the canons of logic that ethics should use.

This is something consequentialists, contractarians, pragmatists, evolutionary theorists, and perhaps many others can accept. But it will not do for a stoic.

We say that ethics is the last, and least, of the branches of human inquiry. It is last because it cannot begin until all relevant description, representation, and prediction are in hand, all relevant possibilities are imagined, all relevant lessons from experience, history, practice are learned—until, let us say, the empirical work is done. It is least because it has no unique subject matter or methods, and in practice often adds nothing but a unique purpose to the empirical work. We also hold, in no way paradoxically, that ethics is the first, final, and foremost human enterprise. The general line of argument we offer in support of this proceeds in five steps, roughly as follows.

First, ethics is subordinate to science and logic. (a) The subject matter of ethics is human character, conduct, and associated mental and social phenomena. It shares this domain with narrative art, history, and social and behavioral science. (b) The methods of ethics are those of logic and reasoned argument, in the broad sense in which the elements of various systems of assertoric and normative logic can themselves be subject to reasoned inquiry. These methods it shares with all the liberal arts and sciences, and (in an informal way) with all literate, intellectual inquiry. (c) The general purpose of ethics is normative—to say what people ought to do and be, rather than to imagine, describe, explain, or predict their lives. This general purpose it shares with all practical advice-giving endeavors (e.g., etiquette, coaching, medicine, psychotherapy). (d) The unique purpose of ethics is its attempt to construct an account of the norms that

are overriding—the norms that take priority over all others. (e) In practice, ethics often has little work to do beyond organizing fact-finding expeditions and sifting the results through a logical sieve. Careful empirical work and a thoroughgoing, reasoned attempt to discover the overriding norm for a given agent or group in a given case often reveal that the agents involved have no room for maneuver, and thus that further ethical inquiry is superfluous, or that the choice between available options is a matter of indifference.

Second, ethical judgments are nonetheless overriding and final. We identify ethical reasoning with the most inclusive sort of practical reasoning anyone can do: ethics is the attempt to say what we ought to do or be, all things considered. Ethical judgment is thus overriding because it subsumes all other relevant practical considerations (self-interest, altruism, prudence, etiquette, and so on) into one final judgment. This is consonant with the Socratic tradition, and thus with ancient Stoicism. Aristotle gives it a twist by defining ethics as prior to politics and giving the claim of finality to the inclusive enterprise (see the *Nicomachean Ethics* beginning at 1094a26). But it is hard to take that as a rejection of this aspect of the Socratic tradition.

By contrast, many contemporary philosophers adopt a special or narrow conception of ethics, identifying it with practical reasoning about a special domain, or from a special point of view, or from a special set of commitments, usually labeled “moral.” The special moral domain, for instance, might be defined as consisting exclusively of universalizable prescriptions about matters that have a substantial bearing on human well-being; the moral point of view might be defined as that of an omniscient, impartial spectator, or that of a rational contractor disposed to cooperate; the special set of moral commitments may be defined in terms of ends such as maximal happiness, principles such as *prima facie* duties to keep promises, or traits such as beneficence.

Advocates of the special or narrow conception of ethics confront difficult priority problems: Why should these special moral judgments override other kinds of practical advice? Why should we be moral rather than egoistic, for example, when the two conflict? One strategy for answering is to argue that such conflicts are illusory—that self-interest, properly understood, will always (usually?) dictate doing the moral thing. More generally, one might try to argue that moral judgments just (usually?) turn out to be the ones that can be justified, all things considered. Or one might argue that the moral sphere is dominant by definition, or by convention. To go beyond that—to assert, for example, that the moral point of view has no special priority—is to give up the unique purpose of ethics.

We are not interested in battling for the rhetorical high ground on this issue. Those who insist on the narrow conception of ethics or morality

may, if they wish, say that stoics do not have an ethical or moral theory at all, because stoics address themselves only to what morally neutral practical reasoning ultimately prescribes. To this we merely point out that ethical inquiry (in the narrow sense) does not settle anything philosophically without an account of whether its “moral” norms override other ones—whether they define what we ought to do or be, all things considered. It is this all-things-considered question that we, like all philosophers, are ultimately concerned with, and which we continue to call ethics.

Third, ethics is not an autonomous endeavor. When we say ethics is subordinate to science we mean, among other things, that changes in our empirical knowledge are likely to generate changes in ethics. When the best science postulates a cosmic telos, as it sometimes did in antiquity, so does stoic ethics. When the best science rejects the view that the universe operates teleologically, in terms of something like human purposes, and suspends judgment about whether cosmic processes have a *de facto* end, convergence point, or destination, so does stoic ethics.

Thus, on the basis of contemporary cosmic science, we reject anthropocentric views of the cosmos. We take it as settled that the universe is unimaginably large and old, and in constant, tumultuous, evolutionary change; that human history occupies a tiny temporal slice of universal history and is confined to a small planet of an unremarkable star on the inner edge of one arm of what is in all probability an unremarkable spiral galaxy. There is no evidence that our galaxy, planet, or species is central to any cosmic process; no evidence that there is anything extraordinary about our origins; no evidence that the natural history of life on this planet is of any cosmic significance whatsoever. Our ignorance in these matters is abysmal. They and related metaphysical issues about the universe as a whole (and about consciousness; our subjectivity) may remain permanently beyond our reach. Cosmology does not tell us why there is something rather than nothing, and whether a god produced it. Metaphysics does not thoroughly reconcile human freedom with determinism, or with indeterminism, or with combinations of the two; it does not fully reconcile the description of human consciousness as an object with the nature of subjective experience; it does not fully resolve problems about the nature of time, identity through time, and causality. The scale of the universe precludes, for the foreseeable future, effective exploration of all but a very small portion of our galaxy—unless by chance we happen upon a cosmic version of the internet. When we face the universe we confront its indifference to us and our own insignificance to it. It takes no apparent notice of us, has no role other than *Extra* for us to play, no aim for us to follow. The relevance of contemporary cosmic science for ethics lies in those humbling facts about our place in the grand (non)

scheme of things, in the aesthetic and quasi-religious awe that the scale and complexity of the universe can arouse, and in what science can teach us about physical necessity and impossibility.

Necessities, impossibilities, and possibilities are facts either of logic (circles cannot be rectangles), of scientific theory (no object can travel faster than the speed of light), of the powers of agents or technology in some reference class (no one now competing in field events can pole-vault twenty-five feet), or about particular agents in particular situations (he's too timid to pole-vault at all). Such necessity or impossibility may conflict with every other sort of fact relevant to practical reasoning: with what agents value, prefer, are committed to, are expected or directed to do, or are trying to do. It may also conflict with norms.

Fourth, stoic ethics is naturalistic. It constructs normative propositions from facts about existing values, preferences, projects, commitments, and conventions. The logic for such construction is outlined in chapter 4 and the appendix, but the general idea is that goal- and requirement-defining facts may be restated as nonethical judgments about what agents ought to do or are required or forbidden to do. The task of ethical reasoning is then to find or construct the ethical, all-things-considered, overriding normative propositions.

Projects, commitments, and conventions may conflict with one another, raising questions of logical possibility, and may conflict with what is physically or technologically possible as well. In such cases it is not possible for agents to satisfy jointly all the sound nonethical normative propositions constructed from the facts. It is then the task of stoic practical reasoning to resolve every conflict into a nonarbitrary, overriding, all-things-considered normative proposition.

Our appeals to human nature are schematic and probabilistic. Modern biological, behavioral, and social sciences do not license more than generalities like these: huge percentages of normally formed human beings are purposive, socially interactive, reciprocally benevolent language users; they have complex emotional-response dispositions and profound attachments or bonds to other people or things; they deliberate and make choices; they typically have some limits or boundaries that they will try to protect categorically. The full list of "normal" human traits is very long, but it defines tendencies, propensities, and probabilities in specified circumstances; it does not define essential characteristics. It is "natural" to find these traits in human character and conduct, but it is equally natural to find a significant number of exceptions.

As a result, none of these characteristics fits into the most familiar forms of ethical argument from human nature, e.g., (a) that humans are by nature X, and that Y is contrary to X, hence, that Y is contrary to human nature; or (b) that X is what defines the unique function (the

essence) of a human being, thus to flourish as a human being is to excel at X.

Moreover, the traits we can identify as typically human are extremely schematic. People are purposive, but what purposes do they share? Science cautions us to take the diversity of human character and conduct seriously; to mistrust reductivism.

Even so, the biological, behavioral, and social sciences contribute to ethics in three important ways: they offer a wealth of material that can be used in the naturalistic arguments described in chapters 5 and 6; they offer explanatory theories (e.g., from evolutionary biology) that help separate relatively fixed traits from transient or malleable ones; and they offer powerful, elaborate analyses of learning, rationality, and rational choice. Stoics use those results, but only in ways compatible with the available evidence about human diversity.

For example, stoic moral training depends on the defensibility of these schematic propositions: (a) Rational deliberative power (rational agency) is a defining feature of mature human consciousness. (b) Every agent's rational powers, whenever exercised, operate in a particular and intricate deliberative field, in Barbara Herman's felicitous phrase (1991), that is laden with projects, preferences, affects, and attachments. (c) Each person's deliberative field evolves continuously. Its initial information gathering and deliberative routines are givens (as if programmed) and, together with the initial situation, yield explicable beliefs. Initial sensibilities, sensitivities, values, aims, commitments, and preferences are also givens and, together with beliefs and deliberative routines, yield normative propositions for conduct. The circumstances in which such normative propositions are acted out or abandoned (that is, the relative strength or weakness of the will) are given, and actions follow. Each process from information gathering to action then becomes information for the next process. (d) The agent's awareness of and reflection on these iterated processes varies. But when awareness is high, it is fair to say rational agency is a self-transformative power: over time, its reflexive, recursive operations can transform its own powers, deliberative field, and operations—hence its norms and actions. (e) Agents can thus remake their characters over time.

Note, however, that no uniform, essentially human content is specified for the deliberative field. When questions of content arise with regard to schematic generalizations about human nature (when, for example, we want to add premises about self-interest or benevolence), we are careful not to claim more uniformity than the empirical work shows.

Fifth, stoic ethics is ultimately about particulars—about how particular people in their particular circumstances ought to live. Modern behavioral and social sciences show the futility of trying to derive such particular

judgments from universal propositions about human nature: the generalizations we know to be true either are not genuine universals and thus do not allow inferences about arbitrarily selected individuals, or are merely schematic and thus are not determinate for particular cases. Moreover, the universal-to-particular approach, in the absence of a universal telos, raises the is-ought problem in an intractable form. But stoic ethical theory begins with the particular—with fully situated individuals—and works carefully out to more general matters. The idea is to incorporate into ethics the richest and most accurate descriptions of the way we live, drawn from the human sciences, law, history, medicine, languages and literatures, religion, philosophy, music, theater, the graphic arts, biography, and journalism.

In the particular—in the intricate web of desire, belief, commitment, aspiration, imagination, communication, cooperation, conflict, patterns of social practice, expectation, and opportunity within which we live—we have goals in abundance. Most of them are emergent—generated by the interplay of circumstance and need, our actions and the reactions of others. From such mundane goals (e.g., eliminating a toothache), in the middle of the activities they steer (going to the dentist), first-order norms come tumbling out (Don't make me wait. Don't make it worse with that pick. Novocain *now*). Practical wisdom assesses the soundness of normative propositions for various purposes. Ethics tells us which ones are sound, all things considered.

Norms and Moral Training

Normative logic has to be powerful enough to express and organize a wide variety of propositions about values, preferences, commitments, goals, projects, standards, social roles, conventions, and institutions, among other things.

Values

Values are facts of various sorts. Sentences of the form “X is good” conflate and obscure that variety. Consider: (a) *Affects*. Sometimes agents are the (understood) subjects of the sentence, and it asserts that they approve of X, or like it, or desire it, as an end. Valuing X in this way has its own internal motive force: from the affect, the agent is disposed to act to achieve X. This internal motive force may conflict with preferences, with judgments about what is possible, necessary, or impossible, or with norms about what ought to be done, all things considered. Stoic training aims to

negate the internal motive force of affective valuations in such conflicts. (b) *Effectiveness*. Sometimes “X is good” asserts that X is an effective means for achieving some end. Valuing X as a means has no built-in motive force; it is not, by itself, a reason for action. (To say that a thumbscrew is good for inflicting pain is not to imply anything about one’s intentions.) Nor does the means to an end always reflect the motive power of the end. Even if the agent desires the end (e.g., physical fitness), she may loathe or be indifferent to the means for achieving it. Even if she rejects the result (lung cancer), she may regret giving up cigarettes. Stoic training aims to inculcate internal, *categorical* motive force for all-things-considered norms, and to make the motive force of other sorts of norms yield in conflicts with all-things-considered ones. (c) *Exemplars*. Sometimes “X is good” asserts that X is exemplary—good-of-its-kind. (As tribal rugs go, that is a good one.) Again this is not by itself a reason for action. Agents may believe such statements while despising the “kind.” (d) *Appropriateness*. Sometimes “X is good” asserts that X is suitable, appropriate, a good fit with other elements of its surroundings, given certain conventions or necessities. (Given the genre you’re working in, that’s a good name for the main character.) (e) *Valuables*. Sometimes “X is good” asserts a dispositional fact about X, analogous to saying that it is magnetic: X is *valuable* in the sense that, under certain conditions, X will be valued (e.g., in one of the ways explicated above).

(f) *Summation*. Sometimes “X is good” summarizes values, either within a type or across types. (“X has many uses. It’s a good thing to have.” “Considering what you like, as well as decorum, usefulness, and so on, X is a pretty good choice.”) The empirical status of across-type summations is problematic. The values involved are only roughly commensurable, and thus subject only to fuzzy quantitative methods. Great effective value for a fundamental project no doubt cancels a weak, negative affective value. (The good of drug therapy that cures a life-threatening disease cancels the fleeting unpleasantness of its administration.) But in many cases the comparisons will be more difficult, resulting at best in a less than fully explicable consensus.

“X is good” may, of course, make a combination of assertions of the sorts just outlined. Sentences of the form “X is better than Y” or “X is best” assert, as matters of fact, ordinal relations either within one type of value judgment or across types. Within types, better and best refer, respectively, to the strength of agents’ approval, the degree of X’s efficacy, or excellence, or fittingness, or dispositional potency, or summative value. Across types, better and best assert fuzzy, summative comparisons.

Stoic training aims to make it possible for agents to evaluate their own (and others’) values by (a) identifying the facts about an agent’s values relevant to choices in each situation and suspending, as appropriate,

further discussion of irrelevant values; (b) making the relevant values into a coherent set (insofar as possible), or at least one that is not self-defeating; (c) evaluating them in terms of their motivational forces for the agent; and (d) rank ordering those motivational forces.

Preferences and Commitments

Preferences are psychological facts: they are the beliefs or dispositions about ordinal relations, among things of value, that have internal motive force for an agent. If an agent prefers Y to X, the agent thereby has a motive for resolving conflicts between them in favor of Y. An agent's preferences do not necessarily track the way she values the objects involved. She can acknowledge the superiority of X over Y along every scale of value she can imagine, including her own affective approval of it, yet still prefer good old Y, in the sense that when faced with the choice, she nonetheless ranks $Y > X$ every time. (Such preferences have saved many marriages.) Stoics hold that this is a form of *akrasia*, and thus a rule of stoic practical reasoning is that preferences ought to track the facts about values. If X is of greater value than Y, it ought to be preferred to Y.

Stoic training aims to negate the internal motive force of a preference when it conflicts with what is possible, or when it does not track the facts about values.

*Categorical commitments*¹ are another class of psychological facts with internal motive force. Such commitments are characterized by the unconditional way in which the agent experiences them, at least initially. Matters of dignity, integrity, honor, privacy, or legality are often experienced in this way—not as things to protect or uphold *if* certain conditions occur, or as means to some end, but rather as things one is bound to seek, or protect, or uphold, period. Like commitments generally, categorical ones may have neither affective value nor the motive force of a project. Rather, they are experienced as attachments, constraints, necessities, requirements, boundaries. Agents are often highly volatile when their commitments are ignored or overridden—more so, perhaps, than when their projects are frustrated. They typically employ metaphors of brokenness, violation, degradation, and disintegration to describe the harm experienced—for example, by invasions of privacy, breaches of trust, deliberate attempts to break one's resistance. If other agents are responsible for the harm, this may evoke long-lasting resentment, anger, rage, desire for revenge. If the agent himself is responsible for the harm, he may have disabling guilt or

¹ I am indebted to George Harris for the felicitous term, but he defines it differently. See his book *Dignity and Vulnerability* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), chap. 1.

shame. These responses have valuable cathartic and motivational effects, but they are also frequently the cause of additional damage (embittered victims who cannot recognize sunk costs; aggressors freshly provoked by each retaliation).

Stoic training aims to make emotional response dispositions into homeostatic devices, set to eliminate damaging effects that do not have countervailing productive ones. It aims to keep volatile responses strategically sound—in deterring violators and strengthening victims—even if this means breaking the link between the degree of response and the degree of harm done to the victim. Residual unrequited harm is treated as a matter of (emotional) indifference.

The strength of categorical commitments is a contingent matter that by definition does not necessarily track preferences, or values, or ethical norms. It is a rule of inference in stoic practical reasoning that first-order normative propositions of the form “It is required (forbidden) that p, nothing-else-considered” may be constructed from categorical commitments. However, it is an axiom of stoic normative logic that normative propositions of the form “All-things-considered, A ought to do X” override conflicting categorical commitments and the normative propositions drawn from them.

Stoic training aims to negate the internal motive force of a categorical commitment when it conflicts with what is possible, or with what ought to be done, all things considered.

Projects

Projects are constitutive facts about agents: to be an agent is to be purposive or goal oriented—that is, motivated (at least dispositionally) to act toward some end(s). The motive force is internal, built into the project, and typically experienced as coming from within—as pressing or pushing one to act. Agents may pursue a project of which they thoroughly disapprove—a project whose means and ends are repugnant, for example, but to which there are no alternatives. A project may include, exclude, or be concomitant with another. And such relations may be necessary or contingent, permanent or temporary, symmetrical or asymmetrical in surprising ways. The fact that project A (abandoning a medical career to become a poet) includes project B (moving to an isolated farm in Nova Scotia), for example, does not mean that it could not be the other way around.

Let us say that a project is indelible to the degree that its pursuit or completion makes a permanent, perceptible difference in any agent’s character or conduct; that it is enabling to the degree that it opens opportunities for any agent; disabling to the degree that it closes them; inescapable to

the degree to which undertaking it (or continuing it) is necessary; comprehensive to the extent that it includes and dominates another project.

At the level of general normative principles, there is little that is useful to say about these matters. Erasable, enabling, escapable projects, for example, are not even *prima facie* preferable to indelible, disabling, inescapable ones. (Think of the ways we want moral education to disable murderous impulses, and to be indelible.) Everything hangs on the details of particular cases.

The dominance of more comprehensive projects over less comprehensive ones, however, is represented prominently in the rules and axioms of stoic normative logic.

Standards

Standards are conditional commitments that define the manner in which agents ought to conduct themselves in pursuing their projects. They are conditional in the sense that they are applicable if a given antecedent project is undertaken; they are commitments in that their internal motive force is experienced as constraint, necessity, requirement, or boundary. Such hypothetical commitments are sometimes used as criteria for deciding which projects to pursue. (“If I can’t do it properly, then I won’t do it at all.”) Standards are legion. They range over all matters of degree relevant to performance of the given project (efficacy, efficiency, difficulty, elements of style, and so on). They define points along a continuum of targets (from perfection to mere adequacy) in terms of an indefinite number of reference classes—from purely formal or logical possibilities (a perfect circle), through possibilities for world-class performers, through what it is reasonable to expect of a local expert, all the way to purely personal abilities. Some standards apply to outcomes only; others to the process; still others to both.

Failed projects and unmet standards can be a source of misery—misery that can be eliminated if one chooses fail-safe projects and meetable standards. It does not follow from this, however, that one ought always to make fail-safe choices. For example, unfulfilled aspirations and failures may contribute indirectly to a good life by motivating extraordinary achievement, which may in turn bring extraordinary satisfaction.

It is an axiom of stoic ethics that an agent ought not to set unmeetable-for-the-agent standards (or undertake impossible-for-the-agent projects), but this is understood to allow attempts to turn impossibilities into possibilities, and to use unachievable ideals instrumentally.

Stoic moral training cultivates the power of retrospective detachment (that is, the power to neutralize the psychological damage of losses) partly

in order to reduce the harm of failure, and thus to *increase* the range of allowable projects and standards that risk failure. Stoic training does not aim to neutralize the harm of productive losses—that is, of harms that play a necessary causal role in producing countervailing goods.

Social Roles, Conventions, and Institutions

Social roles, conventions, and institutions are facts about the expectations people have of one another, and their common dispositions to act, in various definable regions of social life—regions in which cooperative social activity is organized for some ends, or autonomous individual activities are coordinated, or disputes are settled. Such roles, conventions, and institutions may be as informal as being “it” in a game of hide-and-seek, as localized as a nuclear family’s traditional Labor Day activities, as slight as tic-tac-toe; they may be as formal as being a party to a contract under seal, as widely shared as norms of reciprocity, as elaborate and important as a mature legal system. A full description of any such role, convention, or institution will include rules defining participants, and their aims and tasks as participants.

It is useful to think about roles, conventions, and institutions (hereafter abbreviated as institutions) as defined by these sorts of rules: *participation rules*, describing who can or must be subject to or a part of the institution, and what level of participation is appropriate for each; *teleological factors*, describing the institution’s reason for being, and its ultimate or constitutive goals; *deontological rules*, describing conduct that is required and forbidden for each sort of participant, including entitlements, fixed standards, priorities, and aims; *valuational commitments*, describing the sorts of aims, interests, acts, products, traits, achievements, and abilities that are valuable for the institution, given its telos, and the weights assigned to them; *generative and transformative rules*, describing the institution’s legislative processes, if any; *administrative rules*, describing the institution’s executive and police powers, and adjudicative processes, if any; *regulative policies*, practices, and rules, describing the institution’s modus operandi in implementing its rules; *legitimation assumptions*, describing the grounds for recognizing a given commitment, policy, practice, rule, or assumption as one of the institution’s own; *connectedness*, describing the extent and nature of the relations between each participant and all the others; *closure*, describing the extent to which participants in the institution are related only to other participants in it and not to individuals outside it; and *mutuality levels*, describing the extent to which participants recognize themselves and each other as participants, make and recognize reciprocal contributions to each other’s lives, have

a common understanding of the nature of the group, and have univalent responses to it and to each other.

Institutional normative propositions are those constructed from an institution's rules, as applied to the agents at hand, nothing else considered. Think of a game. From its rules we can derive normative propositions about who can play, what the goal is, what moves are allowed, and what moves are best for particular players in particular situations. The same is true of social roles, customs, organizations, and fundamental legal, economic, political, and ideational systems. Such normative propositions may take the form of simple ought-judgments, or various forms of prohibitions, requirements, and unrestricted options (e.g., duties, rights), and they apply to or have force for an agent as a matter of fact about how others (and the agent) will conduct themselves.

Thus if an institution, by its own rules, can conscript unwilling participants, agents can acquire institutional rights and duties against their will, or without their consent (or knowledge). Thus slaves have institutional obligations to obey their masters, if and only if such obligations follow from operative rules that permit slave holding. Of course these are first-order, nothing-else-considered obligations that typically conflict with the slaves' categorical commitments and preferences. Practical reason must address such conflicts and may (or may not) prescribe resistance or rebellion, all things considered.

It is a rule of stoic practical reasoning that agents ought to prefer having control of their own situations, experience, actions, and outcomes to lacking such control. It does not follow from this rule that agents ought to prefer having control of others' lives to lacking it, nor that they ought always to exercise the control they have, even over their own lives. Nor does it follow, nothing else considered, that agents ought to seek the control over their lives that they lack, even if they do not expect to exercise it. (A folk singer says, about a flashy banjo player noted for his accuracy and speed: "I wish I could do that. And then not.") However, stoic moral training aims to develop in each agent the disposition to seek social roles, conventions, and institutions in which she has more rather than less control of her own life, unless having less can be shown to make a countervailing contribution toward a good life for her.

Virtue and Happiness

Stoic ethics is a species of eudaimonism. Its central, organizing concern is about what we ought to do or be to live well—to flourish; to be happy. That is, we make it a rule that all people ought to pursue a good life for themselves as a categorical commitment (second to none but virtue). It

does not follow from this that they ought to pursue any one particular version of the good life, or to cling tenaciously to the one they are pursuing. On the contrary, stoic training aims to make it possible for us to salvage some form of a good life under adversity, and to be able to handle sudden, massive changes in our circumstances. However, it does follow from the eudaimonistic rule that stoic ethics will never prescribe sacrificing all possibility of a good life. In every case where the pursuit of a good life conflicts with other normative propositions of practical reason, stoic ethics will find that agents ought to salvage some form of a virtuous good life for themselves, except in cases in which suicide is the only act left that is consistent with virtue and a good life. Otherwise, if the conflict is unresolvable by practical wisdom, the choice is a matter of indifference. Notice here, however, the controlling role of reason—or as we shall say in later chapters, the exercise of our agency powers, in which practical reasoning all-things-considered has a dominant role. We hold that virtue is achieved through the perfection of such agency. Virtue (the only good) is necessary and sufficient for eudaimonia (which virtue produces). So the way to get to eudaimonia is by way of the perfection of agency and the virtue it produces.

Whole Lives

Living virtuously is the process of creating a single, spatiotemporal object—a life. A life has a value as an object, as a whole. It is not always the case that its value as an object will be a function of the value of its spatiotemporal parts considered separately. But it is always the case that an evaluation of the parts will be incomplete until they are understood in the context of the whole life. What seems so clearly valuable (or required or excellent) when we focus on a thin, temporal slice of a life (or a single, long strand of a life) may turn out to be awful or optional or vicious when we take a larger view. And it is the life as a whole that we consider when we think about its value in relation to other things, or its value as a part of the cosmos.

Stoic ethics retains the whole-life frame of reference for ethics that was prominent in antiquity. In our view, a focus on the parts of a life, or on the sum of its parts, obscures some important features of ethical inquiry. (a) One such feature is the extent to which an agent's own estimate of the value of his life is necessarily inconclusive: others will have to judge his life as a whole, because its character as a whole is not likely to be predictable while he is around to judge it, and because many important holistic considerations, such as its beauty, excellence, justice, and net effect, are things that he is either not well situated to judge or at least not in

a privileged position to judge. (b) Another feature obscured is the range of ways in which a single event or characteristic, without wide causal connections to other elements of one's life, can nonetheless ruin it; for example, the possibility that a monstrously unjust act can indelibly stain a whole life. (c) A third, related obscurity introduced by ignoring a whole-life frame of reference is the extent to which both aesthetic criteria and the notion of excellence have clear roles in the evaluation of a life. The whole-life frame of reference, together with a plausible account of the variety of ways in which a life can be a good one, keeps stoicism sharply distinct from Epicurean doctrines, or their modern welfarist offshoots. How well my life is going from the inside, so to speak, *in terms of the quality of my experience*, is only one thing that enters into an evaluation of it as a whole.

We hold that there is a single unifying aim in the life of every rational agent, and that aim, guided by the ultimate goal of a good life (happiness, eudaimonia), is virtue, achieved through the perfection of agency. Virtue is necessary and sufficient for happiness.

The argument for that doctrine and its corollaries will occupy us throughout part 2. It is important here, however, to quash the thought that the good life we have in mind is in some disappointing way uniform; that it is, for example, always going to turn out to be a contemplative life suspiciously like a philosopher's. Not so. The stoics of antiquity were as diverse as plebeians and aristocrats, rhetoricians and physicians, career soldiers and career poets, apolitical logicians and political advisers, slaves and emperors. And while modernity has narrowed that range (and postmodernity, for all its flash and fury, has done nothing to reverse the trend), such narrowing is a local phenomenon. In principle, the diversity of possible stoic lives—and the lives of stoic sages—is very great. The argument for that assertion is also a task addressed in part 2.

Commentary

Thumbnail history. In his biography of Zeno of Citium, the founder of Stoicism, Diogenes Laertius sketches the views of many ancient Stoics (*Lives of the Philosophers*, book 7). More valuable accounts are to be found in the reconstructed texts of the Stoics themselves and their principal critics. Readers new to this material may wish to start with Brad Inwood and Lloyd Gerson's fine anthology (2008), or with material mentioned later in this commentary. Cicero, a fair-minded skeptic who is sympathetic to Stoicism, is an indispensable ancient source. See his *De Finibus*; *Tusculan Disputations*; *De Natura Deorum*; *De Fato*; and *De Officiis*. And Diogenes gives us some unique information about prominent ancient Stoics. A ready reference list follows. Many of the dates are approximations subject to change.

CHRONOLOGY

Stoics Are in Bold Type

Heads of the Stoa in Athens Are Marked with an Asterisk

Early Stoa, 300–150 B.C.E.

Middle Stoa, 150–55 B.C.E.

Late (Roman) Stoa, 1st century B.C.E.–3^d century C.E.

Neostoicism, 1584–1680 C.E.

BEFORE THE COMMON ERA

Socrates, c. 470–399

Plato, c. 430–347

Diogenes of Sinope (founder of the Cynics), c. 400–325

Aristotle, c. 383–322

Pyrrho of Elis (founder of the Skeptic school), c. 365–270

Epicurus, c. 341–270

***Zeno of Citium (founder of Stoicism)**, c. 335–263

***Cleanthes of Assos**, c. 331–232

***Chrysippus of Soli**, c. 280–207

***Diogenes of Babylon (Seleucia)**, c. 240–152

***Antipater of Tarsus**, 2^d century

***Panaetius of Rhodes**, c. 185–109

Posidonius of Apamea, 135–55

Cicero, Marcus Tullius, 106–43

IN THE COMMON ERA

Seneca the Younger, c. 1–65

Musonius Rufus, Gaius, 1st century

Plutarch, c. 50–120

Epictetus, c. 50–130

Hierocles, c. early 2^d century

Diogenes Laertius, 2^d century?

Sextus Empiricus, 2^d century?

Marcus Aurelius, 121–180, emperor 161–180

Galen, c. 130–201

Justus Lipsius, 1547–1606

Guillaume Du Vair, 1556–1621

Ruined texts. Ancient Stoics were prolific. Chrysippus alone is said to have written hundreds of books—which Diogenes Laertius undertakes to list by name in *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, book 7. But not a single one of those books survives. In fact, no Stoic texts from the Early and Middle Stoas survive intact. What we have from those periods are fragments, often in the form of quotations in books about the Stoics (and other “professors”), often as not in books by authors hostile to Stoicism. Galen, for example, who was no friend to Stoics, nonetheless quoted extensively from Chrysippus and preserved crucial passages from Posidonius (in Galen, *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*). A great deal of such fragmentary material from the Hellenistic period has been collected, translated, and given a topical arrangement with philosophically acute commentaries in A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley’s *The Hellenistic Philosophers*. Volume 1 (translations and commentary) is particularly valuable for directing readers to complete texts such as Galen’s, where one can read an important fragment in an illuminating, if vexing, context. Inwood and Gerson’s *The Stoics Reader* is also indispensable. It has some longer selections, arranged by source within each section, and contains some material not given in Long and Sedley.

From the Late Stoa, we do have some more or less intact texts: *Hierocles the Stoic: Elements of Ethics, Fragments and Excerpts* (2009); four of the original eight volumes of *Discourses* from Epictetus, as well as a *Handbook* drawn from them, in the form of notes transcribed by Arrian, one of Epictetus’s pupils; Marcus Aurelius’s *Meditations* (most of which was probably not intended for publication, at least not in the form we have it); and a great deal of work from Seneca in essays, letters, and plays.

Unfortunately, the most widely available texts from the Roman period—those of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius—can be misleading when read in isolation from earlier material. They are not systematic; they are preoccupied with moral training and the therapeutic aspects of Stoic ethics; and they give great weight (some would argue undue weight) to the notion that everyone has a “role” in a cosmic plan. (In the case of Epictetus, it is unclear how much of this should be attributed to his lack of interest in systematic theory and how much of it should be attributed to Arrian’s lack of interest in transcribing that sort of thing. Arrian’s notes may well be a word-for-word transcription. The question is how much he chose to transcribe. This thought is tantalizing in part because internal evidence from the *Discourses* suggests that Epictetus typically began class sessions by asking a student to read out and comment on a text, after which Epictetus himself would make prepared comments on the same text. What were these texts? Arrian does not say, but it hardly seems likely that they were all of a therapeutic or theological sort. (See Long’s book on Epictetus [2002].)

Seneca is a better source in some respects, and new translations of his entire corpus are now under way, with several volumes already published. Scholars who want to explore the notion that Stoic ethics is universalistic and impartial

sometimes take a Hierocles fragment as one of their texts. (See Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness*, 265–75.)

New translations and reference works. A new translation of the entire extant fragments from Hierocles is now available as *Hierocles the Stoic: Elements of Ethics, Fragments and Excerpts* (2009). It has extensive editorial commentary. New translations of the complete works of Seneca are beginning to come out (Seneca 2007, 2010, 2011, 2014). The *Discourses* of Epictetus along with the *Handbook* are available in a new translation (Epictetus 2014). There are some texts by Epictetus's Stoic teacher (Musonius Rufus 2011). And there is also a new translation of Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations* (2014). Most of the relevant works from Cicero are also in recent editions (Cicero 1997, 2001, 2002, 2006). There are also two major reference works on the Stoics: Inwood's *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics* and Sellars's *The Routledge Handbook of the Stoic Tradition*.

Reconstructed texts. Summarizing stoic ethical doctrines from the meager materials that remain is a challenging task in imaginative reconstruction. Such work has to rely in a substantial way on the classic summaries by Cicero and Diogenes Laertius, together with the material (possibly from Arius Didymus, a Roman philosopher and confidant of Augustus in the first century B.C.E.) quoted without attribution in Ioannes Stobaeus's *Eclogae* or *Anthology*. The authorship and the merit of the material in Stobaeus is disputed, however. Long, in "Arius Didymus and the Exposition of Stoic Ethics" (1983), says it is "the longest and most detailed surviving account of Stoic ethics" (41) and argues that, contrary to appearances, it is a more or less coherent presentation of it. Inwood and Gerson's anthology (2008) contains material from Arius Didymus. Nicholas White, in "Comments on Long's 'Arius Didymus and the Exposition of Stoic Ethics,'" cannot find a useful organizational principle in it and suggests that it obscures rather than illumines the pivotal argument about developmental psychology that the Stoics employed. For discussion of that "cradle argument" and the psychological process that the Stoics called *oikeiōsis*, see chapters 5 and 6 and the commentaries to them.

Initial influences. The extent to which Stoicism was influenced by earlier Greek philosophy gets some scholarly attention. As a young man, Zeno studied with philosophers from various schools, the Cynics among them—principally Crates of Thebes (c. 365–285 B.C.E.). It is obvious that the Stoics rejected the more outrageous aspects of Cynicism. But some accounts of Stoicism emphasize its continued intellectual indebtedness to the Cynics (Gill 2013, 5.1; Sellars 2009, 3.2; Sedley 2003, 1.3). Historians typically trace initial influences on the cosmological elements of Stoic physics to a number of early sources, including Heraclitus, Anaximenes, the Pythagoreans, Plato, and Aristotle (Salles 2009).

The Stoics identified themselves as being in the Socratic tradition, as did most of the Hellenistic schools. Julia Annas (1993), Martha Nussbaum (1994), and John Cooper (2012) address at book length the interconnections of various distinct forms of ancient philosophical ethics in the Socratic and eudaimonistic traditions.

The reception of Stoicism. Criticism of Stoic doctrines—especially from both Academic and Pyrrhonian Sceptics—was prolific during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The Stoics responded vigorously to that criticism but were not available

to do so for the criticisms launched after about 200 c.e. by Neoplatonists, neo-Aristotelians, and Christian theologians. Long and Sedley (1987) cover such disputes during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Careful scholarly overviews of the interpretation, and later influence, of ancient Stoicism can be found in multi-author volumes by Brad Inwood (2003), Ricardo Salles (2009), Tuomas Rasimus et al. (2010), Roger Crisp (2013), and John Sellars (2016).

Debates within the Stoic school. Many disagreements and differences in emphasis arose between Stoic philosophers themselves. For a detailed discussion of these matters, emphasizing debates, differences, and similarities in Stoic accounts of the emotions from Zeno to Seneca, see Richard Sorabji (2000, chaps. 1–10). And for an equally authoritative reconstructive account emphasizing some crucial continuities in accounts of emotion, see Margaret Graver (2007). Similar, shorter discussions on various other topics in the history of Stoicism can be found in Long and Sedley (1987) and in the various chapters of Inwood (2003) and Sellars (2016).

Contemporary sources. Interest in Hellenistic philosophy is now very much revived, thanks in no small measure to the work of A. A. Long, beginning in the late 1960s. Many excellent modern summaries of stoic doctrine now exist, ranging from Gisela Striker's elegantly compressed "Stoicism" article in the *Encyclopedia of Ethics* (1992, 2001), through more detailed accounts such as the one she gives in "Following Nature: A Study in Stoic Ethics," or the one given in Long's *Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics*, or treatises for a scholarly audience such as Inwood's *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, to book-length treatments for a general readership such as F. H. Sandbach's *The Stoics*. Moreover, a great deal of illuminating philosophy based on scholarly reconstruction of stoic doctrine has appeared since the early 1970s. A bibliography of 1,189 secondary source items in twentieth-century philosophy alone was published in the *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 23, Supplement (1985). Sedley (2003, chap. 1) gives an account of the Old and Middle periods of this history. Gill (2003, chap. 2) recounts the history of the Roman period. Long (2003, chap. 15) discusses the influence of Stoicism in later European philosophy. Such secondary sources will be cited throughout the commentaries to follow.

Eudaimonism. Annas, in *The Morality of Happiness*, gives an inspiring and detailed account of the general nature of eudaimonistic theories, their limits and possibilities, and makes a comparative study of ancient Greek versions of such theories. The book is particularly good at characterizing the eudaimonistic "entry point" for mature ethical reflection (how well one's life will have gone as a whole, all things considered, given various ways of living), and the error of thinking that eudaimonism is thereby structurally committed to egoism, notwithstanding its incessant talk of virtue. On the latter point see part 3 of Annas's book. Long's article on "Stoic Eudaimonism" is indispensable for answering criticisms of Stoicism on other points.

Stoic holism and the autonomy of ethics. The extent to which ancient Stoic ethics can be separated from ancient Stoic logic and physics is addressed in Annas (2007), Inwood (2009), and Gill (2013). This is an important issue because ancient Stoicism was meant to be a holistic philosophical system—and a naturalistic

one, through and through. And it is clear that replacing Stoic theology with a supernaturalist account of god and/or the human soul will have considerable difficulty keeping ethical theory within the Stoic tradition, despite the strenuous efforts of some Renaissance neo-Stoics (Lipsius [1584]; Du Vair [1598]) to do this within Christianity, as well as contemporary attempts to connect certain Stoic themes with parts of the New Testament (Rasimus et al. 2010; Engberg-Pedersen 2000). It is not so clear, however, that replacing Stoic physics and cosmology with their contemporary scientific versions will disturb Stoic ethics much, even though it will eliminate some reassuring arguments that appeal to the universe's providential nature.

Following nature. Long, in "The Logical Basis of Stoic Ethics," shows that Stoic ethics is resolutely naturalistic, in the sense of aiming to derive ethics from facts about the world, and that its general program is not in any obvious way fallacious. Striker, in "Following Nature: A Study in Stoic Ethics," is more skeptical, but the way she reads the Stoic slogan about living in agreement with nature (or following it) invites such skepticism. She says: "As Aristotle's ethics is an investigation of virtue and what belongs to it because the end is supposed to be a life in accordance with complete virtue, so Stoic ethics, I believe, is an investigation of what it is to live in agreement with nature. The first question to ask about Stoic ethics would therefore seem to be: why is it good to follow nature?" (3). She points out immediately that there was an alternative formulation, attributable to Zeno and evidently "intended to express the same doctrine" (4). In this formulation, the aim was expressed as "leading a consistent and coherent life, one in which no conflicts occur and that is unified by adherence to a single principle." So the problem is then to "try to understand why the Stoics might have thought that consistency or harmony in one's life is the same as following nature." Striker is quite critical of the logic of Stoic arguments using only the first formulation but suggests that Posidonius's use of the second is more promising (48–49). Cicero, who was actually acquainted with Posidonius, and who claims to be following Panaetius by way of Posidonius, says in *De Officiis*, 3.iii.13, that "when the Stoics speak of the supreme good as 'living conformably to nature,' they mean, as I take it, something like this: that we are always to be in accord with virtue, and from all other things that may be in harmony with nature to choose only as such are not incompatible with virtue." Admittedly, he puts this forward in the context of discussing the conflict between expediency and moral duty. Even so, it suggests that another way to frame the issue is to ask first for an account of the sort of virtue or excellence that can be considered natural or in harmony with nature, and then to ask for an argument about why that sort of excellence should constrain all other action. This is in effect the course we pursue in chapter 6.

Cosmic telos. There is a complex and interesting debate among scholars of the ancient Stoic texts about whether Stoic ethics is eudaimonistic through and through, or whether the Stoic conception of the cosmos as a rational and purposive entity makes it difficult to assimilate Stoicism straightforwardly to (other) ancient eudaimonistic theories. The debate is framed nicely in Long, "Stoic Eudaimonism," and Long there and elsewhere (before and since) has argued that, although ancient Stoic ethics is clearly eudaimonistic, the cosmic telos doctrine plays a

central role in it throughout its history. (See, for an early example, Long, “The Stoic Concept of Evil,” 332–33.) Nicholas White, in “The Role of Physics in Stoic Ethics,” has no doubt that many Stoics claimed a central role for physics—in the sense that the sage would have to have knowledge of nature in order to act appropriately—but is dubious about whether this requirement can reasonably amount to a requirement to integrate physics fully into ethics. T. H. Irwin, in “Stoic and Aristotelian Conceptions of Happiness,” explores a more Aristotelian interpretation; and going farther along this path, Julia Annas, in *The Morality of Happiness* (chap. 5), argues that what does the work in stoic ethical theory is an appeal only to *human* nature, not to cosmic telos. Troels Engberg-Pedersen, in *The Stoic Theory of Oikeiosis*, is even more thoroughly in the antiphysics camp. John Cooper, in “Eudaimonism, the Appeal to Nature, and ‘Moral Duty’ in Stoicism,” dissents sharply from such a view insofar as it restricts what counts as eudaimonism or marginalizes the appeal to cosmic nature in stoic ethics, but see Annas’s exchange with him on this point in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 55 (1995): 587–610. To complicate matters further, in the way Striker, in “Following Nature: A Study in Stoic Ethics,” reconstructs Stoic theory, its source is in theology. (By contrast, the argument in this book assumes that in principle, ancient Stoic theology would be a form of natural theology and thus like science would be subject to revision as human knowledge changes. Indeed, this book assumes that the ancient Stoics would not have separated physics and theology methodologically.) The issue is nearly moot here, however. All hands agree that stoic ethical theory grows out of what we now identify as the eudaimonistic tradition and gives a developmental account of virtue (see chapters 5 and 6) that is thoroughly eudaimonistic. More to the point, the insistence here that the best science (including cosmology) always shapes ethics—and that ethics thus may change in major ways when science does—effectively aligns the argument here with the physics group.

These scholarly disputes notwithstanding, it is clear that stoics did once subscribe to the view that the cosmos as a whole was a rational, purposive being, and that in being rational creatures themselves, humans shared the most exalted property of the cosmos. Here are some representative fragments, in translations by Long and Sedley, in *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (page numbers to their text follow each fragment).

A. Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors* 9.332 (SVF 2–524, part)

The Stoic philosophers suppose that there is a difference between the “whole” and the “all.” For they say that the world is whole, but the external void together with the world is all. For this reason they say the “whole” is finite, since the world is finite, but the “all” is infinite, since the void outside the world is such. (268)

B. Diogenes Laertius 7.134 (SVF 2.300, part, 2.299)

(1) They [the Stoics] think that there are two principles of the universe, that which acts and that which is acted upon. (2) That which is acted upon is unqualified substance, i.e., matter; that which acts is the reason [*logos*] in it, i.e., god. For this, since it is everlasting, constructs every single thing throughout all matter. (268)

E. Calcidius 293

(1) And so the universal body, according to the Stoics, is limited and one and whole and substance [*essentia*]. (2) It is whole, because it does not lack any parts; it is one, because its parts are inseparable and mutually coherent with themselves; it is substance, because it is the prime matter of all bodies, and through it, they say, complete and universal reason passes, just like seed through the genital organs. (3) This reason they take to be an actual craftsman, while the cohering body they take to be without quality, i.e., matter or substance, completely passive and subject to change. (4) But while substance changes, it does not perish either as a whole or by the destruction of its parts, because it is a doctrine common to all philosophers that nothing either comes to be out of nothing or perishes into nothing. For even though all bodies disintegrate by some chance, matter still exists always and the craftsman god, that is, reason, by which it is established both at what time each thing will come to birth and when it will perish. (5) And therefore its birth arises out of existing things and passes away into what exists, because it is bounded by things which abide as immortals, i.e., that by which and that from which the generated thing comes into being. (269–70)

F. Diogenes Laertius 7.137 (SVF 2.526, part I)

They [the Stoics] use “world” [*kosmos*] in three ways: of god himself, the peculiarly qualified individual consisting of all substance, who is indestructible and ingenerable, since he is the manufacturer of the world-order, at set periods of time consuming all substance into himself and reproducing it again from himself; they also describe the world-order as “world”; and thirdly, what is composed out of both [i.e., god and world-order]. (270)

B. Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 1.39 (SVF 2.1077, part)

For he [Chrysippus] says that divine power resides in reason and in the mind and intellect of universal nature. He says that god is the world itself, and the universal pervasiveness of its mind; also that he is the world’s own commanding-faculty, since he is located in intellect and reason; that he is the common nature of things, universal and all-embracing; also the force of fate and the necessity of future events. In addition he is fire; and the aether of which I spoke earlier; also things in a natural state of flux and mobility, like water, earth, air, sun, moon and stars; and the all-embracing whole; and even those men who have attained immortality. (323)

Physics, logic, and ethics. At least one prominent Stoic in the third century B.C.E., Aristo, held that ethics alone was the proper subject matter for philosophy. His view did not prevail. For an account of its demise, brought about mainly by Chrysippus, see Striker, “Following Nature: A Study in Stoic Ethics” (sec. 2). In general, it is certainly clear that the Stoics were committed to getting their science right—and were committed to this from the beginning. A range of relevant fragments can be found in Long and Sedley at section 41 on knowledge and opinion. They begin with Cicero, in his *Academica*, quoting Zeno:

(1) Zeno used to clinch the wise man’s sole possession of scientific knowledge with a gesture. (2) He would spread out the fingers of one hand and display

its open palm, saying “An impression is like this.” (3) Next he clenched his fingers a little and said, “Assent is like this.” (4) Then, pressing his fingers quite together, he made a fist, and said that this was cognition (and from this illustration he gave that mental state the name of *katalēpsis*, which it had not had before). (5) Then he brought his left hand against his right fist and gripped it tightly and forcefully, and said that scientific knowledge was like this and possessed by none except the wise man. (2.145)

This is a particularly pithy description of the differences leading from the initial uncertainties of impressions that we do not grasp at all, to a tentative belief or tentative grasp, to a firm belief or grasp—all of it “within one hand” so to speak. But to have scientific knowledge we have to have a tight and forceful grip from another source—let us call it confirmation or verification of the original cognition. It is a nice image, which can obviously be extended to what we now call empirical science.

Diogenes Laertius, in *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers* (7.39–41), reports some other disputes in the Stoa about the divisions of philosophy as well. It is far from clear what the stakes were in those matters. For a detailed technical examination of them, focusing in part on the fact that Diogenes says it is philosophical “discourse” (*logos*), rather than philosophy simpliciter that has the divisions, see Katerina Ierodiakonou, “The Stoic Division of Philosophy.” The disagreements seem to have been mainly about the way the branches of philosophy were to be ordered, there being near consensus on the number of them (three) and their content. This all may have been some sort of curricular debate. (Teachers then as now could be interminably and comically at odds about such things.) But it seems best to follow the order attributed to Panaetius and Posidonius. (See Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, sec. 26.) It most aptly represents the logical priorities of a naturalistic system of philosophical ethics—that is, an ethics derived from reasoning about human nature and other facts about the world.

A few people want to make a case for the importance of the order in which the branches were taught in the Stoa, and of the fact that ethics was often taught first—or at least independently of physics and logic. Annas, in *The Morality of Happiness* (chap. 5), presses hard on this point. But proper pedagogy hardly ever follows the “systematic order” of the parts of a grand philosophical scheme, so it seems best not to go down this path. I. G. Kidd, in “Stoic Intermediates and the End for Man” (157–58), lends support to this choice. (But see Struck, 2016, ch. 3.)

Materialism and particularism. A good way into the ancient texts on this aspect of stoic doctrine is found in sections 27–29, 45, and 48 of Long and Sedley’s *The Hellenistic Philosophers*. In brief, though stoics begin their ontology with the notion of a “something,” which can be either corporeal or incorporeal (e.g., a void, time) or neither, they insist that everything that “exists” is corporeal. Bodies, however, can be understood metaphysically in four ways (under four categories, or genera): (1) in terms of their primary physical substrate; (2) in terms of the way that a primary substrate may be “qualified” by having as one of its parts another corporeal entity, such as the “breath” (active principle, god) that pervades the universe; (3) in terms of the way such qualified substrates may be “disposed” or internally arranged; and (4) in terms of the way such disposed,

qualified substrates may be related to each other (relatively disposed). Everything that exists can be understood in each of those ways. Metaphysical confusion abounds, however, when we give a name, such as prudence, to a thing considered under only one of its genera (say under the fourth, as certain patterns of behavior relative to others), and then come to identify the nature of prudence with its fourth genera aspects alone. We may thus come to ignore the fact that prudence always has a “qualified” physical substrate—that is, a substrate in a *particular* rational being. We must not forget the fact that stoics are particularists all the way to the ground. Everything that exists, and that has causal powers, is a particular. (Universals are “not-somethings” [Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 1:164]. They are not corporeal. Nor are they merely shorthand names for collections of corporeal things. They are “concepts.”) There are dense metaphysical thickets in all this, but ethics can often avoid them.

The discussion of consciousness and subjectivity in chapter 6 will remind readers again that stoics are thoroughgoing materialists in the sense that they hold that there is only one kind of “stuff” or substrate of which existing things are composed. David Jones (in correspondence) has pressed the point, however, that we must make clear both that we deny substance dualism and that we decline to follow any of the rigorously reductive or eliminative versions of materialism—versions that reject all forms of emergent property dualism, for example. But it seems plausible to think that the phenomenon of subjectivity resists all proposed reductions of that sort. (See Thomas Nagel, “What It Is Like to Be a Bat,” in *Mortal Questions*; Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*; Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind*). If so, it is possible to suppose that consciousness is an emergent entity (or perhaps set of properties) of a certain highly complex organization (or organizations) of matter—specifically, in the human case, of a healthy neurological system. In its substance, or substrate, it is a physical thing, but it is a distinctly different kind of physical thing than the bits and pieces of matter from which it emerges, and upon which its continuation depends. Jones suggests the label “compositional materialism” for this view, and that label is attractive in part because it preserves a connection with ancient Stoic roots. Ancient Stoics were physicalistic “entity-but-not-substance-dualists,” in the sense that they held that body and mind were material bodies of different sorts, blended or fused together in a conscious being. (See Long, “Soul and Body in Stoicism.”) The difference between then and now is of course in the causal account we now suppose will one day be given about the origin of mind. Empirical science, beginning in this case at least with Galen (*On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*, books 1–2), has convinced us that the origin of mental phenomena is to be found in neurological processes—not in the heart or the breath, certainly, and not in god either. But that sort of change in doctrine is nothing new for us. Sedley, in “Chrysippus on Psychophysical Causality” (326), argues that ancient Stoic doctrines about the corporeality of the soul may be read as “attempts to update [Platonic dualism] in the light of the latest science.”

Values, facts, and norms. Ancient Stoic claims that virtue (or moral good) is the only thing that is genuinely good—and conversely that it is only vice or lack of virtue, rather than pain, disease, or misery, that is bad—have often been considered perverse, or at a minimum exceedingly obscure. Long, in “The Stoic

Concept of Evil,” does much to remove the grounds for those objections, but dispute continues about how to interpret the “value” of ordinary goods—things that the Stoics called “indifferent,” though some of them were to be “preferred” to others. There are various ways of interpreting that doctrine to make it plausible. Among the best of these are the ones given in Kidd, “Stoic Intermediates and the End for Man,” and White, “Stoic Values.” In effect, a similar one is given in chapters 6 and 7, and others are cited in the commentary to chapter 6, quoting relevant passages from White. Stoics are perfectly aware of the importance of all the things people ordinarily count as goods. Moreover, the analysis of values offered in this chapter is meant to caution against the temptation to read the Stoics as denying “intrinsic” worth to all ordinary goods. They are not committed to the position that pleasurable affects, friendship, and so on are merely instrumental or “extrinsic” goods.

Good lives. It is useful to divide conceptions of the good life into plural and unitary ones. A *plural* conception holds (a) that the goods realizable in a human life are genuinely diverse—that is, not reducible to a single species; (b) that genuinely diverse combinations of goods are sufficient to make a life a good one, and thus that good lives differ in kind as well as degree; and (c) that any theoretical cover to be found for the diverse array of good lives will be purely formal, or schematic, or perhaps merely heuristic. A *unitary* conception, by contrast, holds either (a') that goods are not diverse, and thus good lives differ only in degree; or (b') that whether goods are diverse or not, there is only one set of them sufficient for making a life a good one; or (c') that though there may be more than one sufficient set, all of them have in common the same ordered subset of necessary goods—a set rich enough, or ordered rigidly enough, to ensure that all good lives will be remarkably similar.

By those standards, Stoics appear to argue for a unitary conception, since they hold that virtue alone is good, and that it, and it alone, is necessary and sufficient for a good life. So they appear to hold both (a') and (b'). Stopping there, however, would be highly misleading, because stoics also endorse some commonsensical considerations adduced by pluralists.

Consider, for example, the line of argument in Becker, “Good Lives: Prolegomena.” Begin by observing that there is a rather long list of desiderata that people ordinarily regard as criteria for assessing whether their lives are going well, and for assessing whether, on the whole, their lives have been good ones. These “criterial goods” are plausibly regarded as distinct from one another, and all of them are either intrinsic, necessary, or widely instrumental goods. Such a list of criterial goods (so the argument goes) will include at least the following, in addition to the material conditions necessary for sustaining life and consciousness: pleasant, self-conscious experience; an understanding or knowledge of the nature, value, and meaning of things; the power of self-command; the harmonization of reason, desire, and will; excellence (being good of one’s kind); meaningful opportunity, meaningful activity, meaningful necessity (in the sense of participating in endeavors in which one’s actions are required); self-esteem; benevolence; mutual love; sexuality; rectitude; integrity; aesthetic value.

Stoics think that in a virtuous life, all such ordinary goods would be ordered and sought by the exercise of practical wisdom, and also that the profile of such

goods in virtuous lives would be very far from uniform. Indeed, while they would reject the skepticism in the “Good Lives” article about unitary accounts of the good life (and to make the point plain, Becker now withdraws that skepticism), they would concede that a second major section of the article is fundamentally correct. Namely, they would agree that an examination of various standard candidates for the title of “the” good life (or the best life) will show that they are plausible only to the degree that they succeed in incorporating all or most of the criterial goods on the list, and that this is true also of the unitary account that stoics offer. Moreover, if that is true, then stoic sages in different circumstances and ages will organize and pursue these criterial goods in remarkably different ways, leading to remarkably different stoic lives.

For similar (nonstoic) thoughts about the diversity of moral character, one might well begin with Robert Nozick’s famous challenge to political unifiers, in the form of a list of real people with widely divergent interests and conceptions of the good life in *Anarchy, State and Utopia*. James Griffin’s *Well-Being* is a relevant source here also, as is John Kekes’s *The Morality of Pluralism*. We note also the defense of the wide variety possible in “moral” personalities in Owen Flanagan’s *Varieties of Moral Personality*.

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Julia Annas gave me patient and detailed advice on several points in the section on cosmic telos. Confirmation of several major themes of part 1 may be found in a recent unpublished paper by A. A. Long, “The Stoic Legacy on Naturalism, Rationality and the Moral Good.” The material on the two concepts of morality is drawn from Becker, “The Finality of Moral Judgments,” and Becker, *Reciprocity*. The latter, and Becker, “Community, Dominion, and Membership,” elaborate the concept of a well-defined activity.

Part Two ---

THE WAY THINGS MIGHT GO

Normative Logic

THIS SHORT CHAPTER, together with its somewhat more elaborate appendix and commentary at the end of the book, lays out in a formal way the practical logic sketched informally in Part One. It tests that sketch for hidden assumptions and consistency and is a further explanation of how stoics propose to get from “is” to “ought.” Readers with limited patience for formal logic will need only the informal exposition given here. The calculus itself is confined to the appendix, and since the commentary that would normally follow this chapter deals mostly with technical matters related to the calculus, it is also in the appendix. Readers who are gripped by the desire to see symbols may turn directly to the calculus. Enough informal exposition is repeated there to make it intelligible, and it has the advantage of giving a fuller and more precise account.

Nothing in the arguments of subsequent chapters will involve manipulating the calculus, but everything in them depends on the existence and coherence of it (or of something like it). Stoic ethical theory, given some of its extraordinary claims, cannot afford to proceed without confidence that the assemblage of assumptions and logical operations it employs are clear and adequate for its purposes. We are therefore committed to considering such matters in detail. What follows here, however, is offered only with the aim of applying existing formal methods to ethics, and not with the aim of extending logic itself in a significant way. These days, philosophers are as specialized as everyone else. Those of us in ethics rarely do anything original in logic, and our logicians return the favor.

We agree with Aristotle’s dictum that philosophers should not seek more determinateness in their arguments than the subject matter permits—and particularly that we should not expect to get the rigor and precision of mathematical demonstrations in the arguments of ethical theory. But we also agree with Hume that the logic employed in ethics is often deeply obscure; and we agree with Brian Barry that even when the logic is clear, it often starts too close to its destination. It is our aim to avoid all three of those pitfalls.

The task of working out this normative logic in detail shows that stoic ethics does indeed have a sound method of deriving moral judgments from facts about the world—a method that meets the following tests: First, it is capable of representing the full range of behavioral norms relevant to normative judgments, and of assigning a clear meaning to “moral

judgment” as opposed to other sorts of normative ones. Second, it makes very plain just how we propose to derive moral judgments from facts about the world. There is no logical sleight of hand here. And third, it shows that such derivations can be logically sound, nontrivial, and systematically coherent.

Norms and Normative Propositions

Throughout these arguments we make a sharp distinction between norms and normative propositions. In our lexicon, norms are facts about the intentional behavior of particular agents; they are facts about agents’ goals, projects, or endeavors—specifically about what they believe they must do or be, ought to do or be, or may do or be. Normative propositions are assertions about norms—attempts to represent facts about norms in assertoric propositions about them. Such assertions can be true or false. Indeed, in stoic logic they *must* be either true or false and cannot be both. There is no middle ground of indeterminacy (or “higher” ground of both-truth-and-falsity) about the truth value of a given representation of a norm. We thus can make use of the resources of standard, bivalent, truth-functional logic.

Types of Normative Propositions

The logic described here, however, diverges from standard presentations of deontic logic in which the normative operators are obligation, permission, and prohibition—all interpreted in terms of the alethic modal notions of necessity, possibility, and impossibility. Instead we use normative operators of requirement, ought, and indifference, and it seems unlikely that an adequate semantic interpretation of them can be given in terms of modal logic. We make use of modal operators as well; we simply do not claim that their semantics may serve for our normative ones. Further discussion of these matters is given in the commentary to this chapter in the appendix and (implicitly) throughout chapter 5.

OUGHT

We use “ought” in the following way: to say that an agent ought to do or be x is to say that her doing (or being) x is *advisable* (but not necessarily required) in terms of some endeavor that she has. That is, to say that she ought to do x is to say that her doing x will advance one of her endeavors along a defined trajectory toward its goals. Endeavors are intentional,

goal-directed activities. Some things we do in pursuit of them are, as we say, steps in the right direction—on track, on course, on target, in accord with what we are trying to do, effective, true to our purposes, right, correct. Other things are *inadvisable*, in the sense that they are deviations from the defined trajectory. Still others are neither advisable nor inadvisable, in the sense that they have no effect on our progress along the trajectory. Note that, as in navigation, deviations from a defined course do not necessarily prevent one from reaching one's destination. One can make course corrections to get back on the original path, or one can chart a new course. Moreover, to say that an act is advisable is not to say that it is unique in that regard (there may be several adequate solutions to a given navigational problem), or that it is the optimal choice (one solution may not be preferable to another).

REQUIREMENT

We use “requirement” in several distinct ways, which for convenience are harmlessly conflated in the calculus, as they are in ordinary speech. To say that an agent is required to do (or be) x is to say one or more of three things: (a) It may be to say that her doing or being x is in some sense a necessary condition for her pursuing some endeavor she has. (b) It may be to say that within the terms of some endeavor, she ought to be (or it is required that she be) sanctioned for doing or being non- x . Or (c) it may be to say that her doing or being non- x would be a “nullity” in her endeavor—would not count as pursuing that endeavor at all. (We include nullity as an alternative to make note of the cases in which the “necessity” for doing x , or the “sanction” for doing non- x , comes from the fact that non- x does not count for anything. Legal requirements that a will be witnessed are of this sort. Failing to meet them is just failing to make a valid will. This is a special case of the “necessary condition” alternative, but one that is frequently forgotten.) A prohibition is simply a requirement that one *not* do (or be) x .

For present purposes we do not think this triple disjunction needs to be broken apart to identify two or three different sorts of requirement. That is, we do not think these distinctions affect the ordinal relationships or inferences outlined below. Note that its being *required* that an agent do x is quite distinct from its being the case that she *ought* to do it. Requirements often constrain or even frustrate the pursuit of a goal.

INDIFFERENCE

The indifference operator is interpreted as a logical remainder. To say that it is a matter of indifference whether an agent does x is to say that

her doing x is neither advisable nor inadvisable, neither required nor prohibited.

There are important and interesting logical relationships between these normative operators and the various sorts of imperatives, endorsements, recommendations, exclamations, and other speech acts typical of ethical discourse. Imperatives, for example, often elide the distinction between requirement and ought. (“Just do it” is ambiguous in that way.) And it is challenging to try to think through the extent to which the meaning of prescriptive language in general overlaps that of the normative propositions used here. We leave all such matters for another time.

Levels of Inclusiveness and Dominance

An agent’s endeavors, and hence the norms that are elements in them, are often related hierarchically. For example, a training regimen pursued to improve athletic performance is embedded, as it were, in the performance endeavor, and the performance norms control or dominate the training ones. Stoic normative logic defines moral norms formally as the ones that are elements of our most inclusive and controlling endeavor. See the axioms at the end of this chapter. It is the task of chapters 5–7 to describe and defend a conception of what that endeavor (achieving and sustaining virtue) amounts to.

Possibility and Necessity

Matters of possibility and necessity figure prominently in stoic ethics, and so this normative logic includes modal operators, interpreted as uncontroversially as possible. The technical issues here we leave to the appendix, and we make only this informal observation about our use of the alethic modalities. We distinguish three ranges of modality: logical, theoretical, and practical. (a) Logical possibilities are the largest category, including every possibility that is not self-contradictory. In terms of our goal-directed endeavors, this also includes every possibility that is not self-defeating. (b) Theoretical possibilities are a narrower set. What is logically possible may not be possible in terms of our theories of the way things work. Einsteinian physics, for example, holds that travel at speeds greater than that of light is not possible; Lawrence Kohlberg’s theory of moral development holds that people cannot reach stage 6 without going through stages 1–5 in order. So a proposition asserts that x is a theoretical impossibility if it asserts that it is inconsistent with the laws, postulates, predictions, or explanations of a given theory. (c) Practical possibility is a

still smaller set. It is defined by the abilities of given individuals in given circumstances. So a proposition that asserts that x is a practical possibility asserts that it is logically consistent with the abilities of the people in some referenced class. Note that theoretical and practical possibility are merely context-restricted forms of logical possibility.

Conflicts and Ordinal Relationships

As will be clear in the section on normative constructs below, and will be explained even more fully in chapter 5, the logic described here represents and manipulates conflicting norms. It resolves all such conflicts, however, in three stages. First, it records whatever priorities are in fact built into the types of norms involved. For example, in general we suppose that requirements take priority over conflicting oughts, and that indifference yields to either. Second, it records conflicts among requirements, or among oughts or indifferences, in terms of ordinal relations of inclusiveness and dominance that are constructable from them. Third, it gets closure on any remaining conflicts among norms of the same rank by constructing normative propositions (moral ones) that represent forced choices.

Normative Constructs: Getting from Is to Ought

Certain constellations of facts, necessities, and possibilities license the construction of normative propositions. Given facts about the rules of a game, for example, and facts about the possibilities open to players, it is plain how we can legitimately construct normative propositions about what the players ought to do *strictly in terms of the game they are playing*. And it is equally plain how we can then reconstruct such normative propositions in terms of the players' more comprehensive activities—by enlarging the frame of reference to include facts about the various aims and preferences that have brought them to play the game, and the terms under which they are willing to stay in it. The normative power of such propositions is conditional: *If* we restrict ourselves simply to the rules of the “game” we are playing and the possibilities open to us, *then* we ought to . . .

All the licit normative constructs in this logic are conditional in that sense—they are all constructed from (and thus logically tethered to) antecedents that define an ongoing activity, its participants, and their possibilities. If the antecedent conditions are all-things-considered ones—that is, if the antecedent ongoing activity in terms of which the normative judgment is constructed is simply all-things-considered practical reasoning applied to a given situation—then such constructs have some similarity to

categorical imperatives. This is so because, by definition, there is no way to reconstruct all-things-considered judgments in terms of antecedents that have *not* been considered. Thus in effect they have the sort of finality claimed for categorical imperatives.

First-Order Constructs

The classic stoic injunction to “follow nature” is realized here as following the facts. We begin with a look at a small sampling of frequently used rules for transforming descriptive propositions about the aims, rules-of-play, and practical possibilities within a given ongoing activity into normative propositions about those activities. (For a fuller sample, see the appendix.)

FROM MEANS AND ENDS TO OUGHTS

For stoics, means/end reasoning is the underlying form of all practical reasoning. It is implicit even in apparently noninstrumental inferences from desires or categorical commitments, for example, because those inferences depend on assumptions about their connection to eudaimonia as human happiness or flourishing. And there is no *practical* reasoning about that end, as opposed to a philosophical defense of it. However, it would not be instructive, in a normative logic, to represent all inferences simply in terms of means/end relationships. That would obscure many important distinctions. Here we will treat means/end inferences on a par with those about desires, commitments, appropriateness, and so forth.

Such means/end inferences at a given ordinal level take several forms, depending on the possibilities for action. One is what we may call the rule of the best means: if we can identify some course of action or trait *x* as a practically possible means to achieving one or more of the goals we are pursuing, and it is the best of the practical possibilities, then *nothing-else-considered*, we ought to do *x*.

That leaves the cases in which there are several routes to the same goal, none superior to the others. In such cases, though we need to avoid the indecision of Buridan’s Ass, immobilized between two equidistant and equally desirable piles of hay, the choice is arbitrary. So we resolve such cases with an inference that the agent ought to make an arbitrary choice between the means that are in equipoise.

OTHER OUGHTS

In some endeavors the desires of the participants are allowed to trump all other considerations; the mere desire to do (or be) *x* counts as a sufficient

reason for doing or being x , nothing else considered. Improvised games come to mind as an example—games in which the shifting whims of the players are allowed to overturn any of the rules, so that what begins as (say) a backyard game of croquet can mutate first into a test of love and then into an indefinite range of games that are not croquet. In other endeavors, desires are subordinate to certain considerations (e.g., efficiency) but are otherwise defined as sufficient reasons for action. And it may be that in still other endeavors, a desire to do x never counts as sufficient reason for doing it—or even counts as sufficient reason for *not* doing it.

We may represent these situations together in the following rule of inference: if the desire to do (or be) x is a sufficient reason for doing it in one of the agent's endeavors, then (nothing-else-considered) the agent ought to do or be x .

Similar rules are used to construct normative ought-propositions about ideals, guidelines, and various kinds of transactional obligations.

FROM COMMITMENTS TO REQUIREMENTS

A given endeavor, practice, or institution may define participants as categorically committed to various courses of action merely from the fact of their being participants in the endeavor. Such commitments are categorical in the sense that within the endeavor they are not conditioned on anything but participation—not on the desires or goals of individual participants, or the consequences of the required acts, for example. Such commitments are not optional within the endeavor. Thus our rule is that if an agent is categorically committed to x in some endeavor, then (nothing-else-considered) he is required to do or be x .

FROM STANDARDS TO OUGHT-NOTS

Many endeavors have standards of good form and appropriateness that fall short of the requiredness of categorical commitments but are nonetheless important practical considerations. Such endeavors have an etiquette as well as a set of goals, an aesthetic as well as a set of commitments, a conception of what is fitting as well as a conception of what is effective. When we disapprove of an admittedly licit and effective practice as ugly, uncouth, or tacky—or commend a failure as classy—we appeal to such standards. They are not typically employed, however, to identify a particular course of action or way of being that must or ought to be pursued. Rather they are employed to assess conduct or character in terms of some threshold of objectionability. Such appeals may be represented in a rule of inference about things we ought *not* to do or be—a rule of this general form: if x is standard or fitting conduct or character for an agent in

some endeavor, then (nothing else considered) he ought not to do or be anything other than x .

Escalation

Conflicts obviously arise regularly between normative propositions constructed in the way just described—that is, in terms of discrete endeavors, nothing else considered. We resolve such conflicts by means of rules for generating superordinate normative propositions that dominate the conflicting ones. These rules do nothing more than represent ways in which our norms actually do (often) have an implicit ordinal relationship to one another.

There are two crucial ways in which such ordinal relationships occur. One we call comprehensiveness: when one endeavor is embedded in a more comprehensive and controlling one, the latter's norms are superordinate. The other we call assessment: when we recognize one endeavor as subject to assessment and correction by another, the latter's norms are superordinate.

Not every conflict is in principle resolvable in this way, however. Sometimes norms of the same ordinal rank conflict. We resolve such conflicts with forced choices—that is, with rules of the following sort: conflicting requirements at level n to choose between mutually exclusive courses of conduct generate a normative proposition that resolves the matter at level $n + 1$.

There are a good many technical complications in this escalation process, but the important point is getting a sound rule of closure for every case.

Transcendence

In stoic normative logic, normative propositions representing practical reasoning, all things considered, are defined as moral ones. We thus need rules for getting from propositions at a given level n to (unsubscripted) moral ones. Such rules are merely variants of escalation rules in which we include a premise that represents the result of all-things-considered deliberation. Together with the axioms of our logic, we may then make an inference to a moral proposition.

Axioms of Stoic Normative Logic

This swift overview of a calculus of normative logic concludes with an informal statement of four central postulates that are specifically stoic.

(There are others in the full system, but they address technical details in the calculus.) The ones listed here are given a meta-ethical defense in other chapters. Here they merely round out an intuitive picture of the logical ground on which stoic ethical arguments ultimately rest.

Axiom of Encompassment. The exercise of our agency through practical intelligence, including practical reasoning all-things-considered, is the most comprehensive and controlling of our endeavors.

Axiom of Finality. There is no reasoned assessment endeavor external to the exercise of practical reasoning all-things-considered.

Axiom of Moral Priority. Norms generated by the exercise of practical reasoning all-things-considered are superordinate to all others.

Axiom of Futility. Agents are required not to make direct attempts to do (or be) something that is logically, theoretically, or practically impossible.

We turn now from formal to substantive matters, including the defense of these axioms.

Following the Facts

SLOGANS oversimplify, and in a contentious intellectual environment they invite misunderstanding. The environment for stoics has always been a contentious one, fostered in antiquity by vigorous disputes within the tradition, and it was clear even then that stoic ethics would probably be better off without its “follow nature” slogan. We are, however, too deeply branded with it to renounce it now. The best we can do is reinterpret it as follows.

Following nature means following the facts. It means getting the facts about the physical and social world we inhabit, and the facts about our situation in it—our own powers, relationships, limitations, possibilities, motives, intentions, and endeavors—before we deliberate about normative matters. It means facing those facts—accepting them for exactly what they are, no more and no less—before we draw normative conclusions from them. It means doing ethics *from* the facts—constructing normative propositions a posteriori. It means adjusting those normative propositions to fit changes in the facts, and accepting those adjustments for exactly what they are, no more and no less. And it means living within the facts—within the realm of actual rather than hypothetical norms.¹

Following the facts thus has nothing to do with conjuring up a quasi-theological vision of the universe as a teleological system whose ends we are designed to serve—unless, of course, it is a fact that the universe *is* such a system and we *are* designed to serve it. And even if that were so, stoics would not necessarily infer that we ought, all things considered, to serve as designed. In our normative logic, the belief that we have a function in a goal-directed universe merely generates some first-order normative propositions that might or might not survive conflicts with normative propositions from other sources. Stoic ethical theory is not enslaved by nature, gods, emperors, or the status quo. Stoics have been slaves (and emperors) but have argued against the mistreatment of slaves. Stoics have lived in parochial settings but have argued for cosmopolitan politics and universal

¹ Recall that we use “norms” here to refer to the facts that normative propositions represent, and never to refer to the propositions themselves insofar as they are merely representations. Of course the propositional representation of a norm can itself become an object of thought for an agent, and then as an object of thought be among the facts represented by other normative propositions. But for reasons of clarity, it is important to avoid the temptation to call normative propositions themselves, as such, norms.

moral norms. Stoics have accepted the facts of oppression and danger for what they are but have fought to the death. Stoics have adjusted to a changing world but have also committed suicide as a matter of principle. Following nature—following the facts—is not quietism, conformity, or passivity. Nor is it romanticism. Stoics do not confuse virtue with genius, heroism with metaphysical rebellion, nobility with contempt for the mundane, emotion with passion, passion with loss of control, loss of control with largeness of spirit, victory with triumph, or death with tragedy.

Impossibilities

The Axiom of Futility represents the stoic doctrine that we ought not to try to do things that are known to be impossible, and it is written as a prohibition that dominates any normative proposition to the contrary. This doctrine is merely a part of what it means to follow the facts, but it has been the source of stubborn misunderstanding. The charge against it is that, in order to avoid dashed hopes, disappointment, anxiety, and despair, stoics use the doctrine of futility to avoid projects that might fail and in general never struggle or stretch or try to achieve anything beyond what they know they can accomplish. Thus critics say that if we were all to follow stoic advice, we would never extend ourselves to press beyond what we currently think we can achieve; we would forgo the possibility of discovering that we are not as limited as we supposed; heroism and the spirit of adventure would be lost; excellence in everything from science to sport would be forfeited; the starship *Enterprise* would never be launched; etc., etc., etc. Isolated remarks from a moral-training manual (a handbook drawn from Epictetus's teaching) are cited in support of the charge, and associated with the sort of parental cautions adolescents and other romantics reject as overly protective. (Don't set yourself up for a fall. Don't aim too high. Don't get your hopes up. Don't set your heart on it.)

There will be more about this in the discussion of detachment, in chapters 6 and 7. Here it will suffice to point out that the Axiom of Futility says only that when we know that a given undertaking is impossible, we are prohibited from undertaking *it*. This does not imply that we ought to refrain from other efforts to make it possible. Nor does it imply that we should refrain from exploring the possibilities when we are ignorant of them. Making things possible, and exploring the possibilities, are meta-endeavors quite distinct from directly undertaking things that we currently believe to be impossible. We undertake such meta-endeavors with respect to practical, theoretical, and even logical impossibilities. Roger Bannister trained himself to make it practically possible for him to run a four-minute mile, and then he did so. Nothing in that series of projects

runs afoul of stoic doctrine. Scientists construct hypotheses about what is theoretically possible and then explore those possibilities by testing the hypotheses—revising their theories (and hence the theoretical possibilities) in terms of what they find. There is nothing unstoic about that. Mathematicians and logicians regularly explore their understanding of coherence, consistency, and contradiction. Such exploration has led to the invention of non-Euclidean geometries and deviant logics, previously thought to be hopelessly incoherent, and to the discovery of paradoxes in areas such as transfinite mathematics that were previously thought to be coherent. Thus the range of logical possibilities expands and contracts, and stoics certainly have no doctrine that opposes creative work in logic and mathematics.

The point cannot be more straightforward: we reject the soundness of any normative proposition constructed from an agent's endeavor to do (directly) what she believes to be impossible. We do this because such endeavors are incoherent, in the sense that their propositional representation always tacitly involves an inconsistent pair of propositions: one about impossibility, to the effect that there are no available means to achieve a given end; the other about a contrary possibility, to the effect that there is a course of conduct that might be a way to achieve the same end. We do not deny the existence of such incoherence in human behavior or shrink from representing it in our logic, any more than we deny or shrink from representing conflicting norms. But the system of normative logic constitutes a formal representation of practical reasoning, and practical reasoning aims to resolve such conflict and incoherence. Thus persistent practical reasoning, while it will represent the phenomena of conflict and incoherence, will not allow them to remain as they are. It will somehow force a coherent, superordinate normative proposition from them.

Is this preferable to letting them stand? We think so. We agree that incoherent behavior can sometimes have useful results, for the agent or for us all. Agents may find it exhilarating. We may find it charming or noble; we may make it into moving narratives; it may expose errors in our beliefs about what is possible. But illness can have such results too. (It can be a liberating source of leisure; it can elicit the comforting care and concern of others; it can force us into productive new patterns of conduct.) This does not move us to recommend either incoherence or illness, especially when their beneficial effects are available in other ways. If the facts as you know them are that something is (currently) impossible for you to do, but you have good reason to think you could *make* it possible, and good reason to try, then you ought (at some normative level *n*) to try. Nothing in or implied by the Axiom of Futility says otherwise. If you do not know whether a given undertaking is possible but have good reason to think you could find out, and good reason to try to find out, then you ought (at some

normative level n) to run the investigation. All that stoic doctrine insists on is that we distinguish such coherent meta-endeavors from incoherent direct attempts to do the impossible, and that we bring closure to practical reasoning about the incoherent ones by requiring that they not be pursued.

A Posteriori Normative Propositions

The axioms and rules of inference in our normative logic represent all norms as connected to the endeavors of some agent, and exclude from moral deliberation only those normative propositions constructed (in part or in whole) from errors of fact. The short answer to why we do this is simply that we cannot find norms in matters of fact other than the endeavors of agents, and a commitment to following the facts means that (a) we must exclude falsehoods, and thus the normative propositions based on them, from our deliberations, but (b) we must not exclude, a priori, any normative propositions that *are* based on facts, no matter how bizarre, destructive, or repugnant they may be. Given the diversity, divergence, and conflict among human endeavors, following the facts in this way has sweeping and uncomfortable consequences for ethics. Some defense of the discomfort is in order.

Norms and Individuals

Why connect all norms to facts about individual agents, and in particular the projects or endeavors of agents? We answer in three steps: first, that at least some norms do come from individual agents' endeavors; second, that endeavors conceived as "social facts" or institutions are not purposive, and thus do not generate or contain norms in the way that an individual's endeavors do; and third, that we can find no purposiveness, and no other source of norms, in anything other than the endeavors of individual agents.

First, it is evident that all projects or endeavors are by definition purposive and have practices about who may participate and how participants may pursue their purposes. These features of the endeavors (goals, requirements, standards, ideals) are norm-making in the sense that, together with facts about the possibilities for a participant's conduct or character, they regulate behavior. And we represent such behavioral facts in our logic with propositions about what participants ought, or are required, to do or be, nothing else considered. All the actual endeavors of individual agents, as opposed to hypothetical or fictive ones, are purposive and thus norm-making in this way, no matter whether they are as elaborate

and institutionalized as trying a case in court or as evanescent as a child's solitary, improvised play. (Hypothetical or fictive endeavors have only hypothetical or fictive norm-making properties and yield only hypothetical or fictive norms.)

Second, we insist that all actual endeavors, no matter how complex and social, are at bottom facts about the conduct and character of individual agents. Of course it may be that an endeavor like "speaking grammatical English," or "living by the rule of law," conceived of as a project common to a large number of people over many generations, will appear to have a social reality independent of the individuals participating in it. For example, participants may all believe that their understanding of the endeavor is imperfect—indeed, believe that no one individual has ever understood it completely—yet that all are participants in the same thing. Moreover, a thing may (like an economic system) have properties that can be understood only as emergent, systemic ones (as in macroeconomics). If so, then that thing—that system—does not reside, as it were, even as an intellectual object, in any individual agent. In what sense, then, are all the norms "it" generates facts about the conduct and character of individual agents? We answer that "it" generates no norms at all. Social systems are like weather systems: they are dynamic but not purposive; they have direction but not goals; they have power but not agency. When stoics gave up thinking of nature as a teleological system, we gave up thinking of systems, period, as teleological. So it is misleading shorthand to speak of systems and social institutions as endeavors. They do not have the sort of norm-making properties that purposive agents do. When I endeavor to live by the rule of law, confess my incomplete knowledge of it, accept others (or perhaps some texts) as authorities on it and follow their edicts, the norms involved are all *my* norms, derived from *my* version of the endeavor of living by the rule of law.

Third, we assert that we can find no sets of facts about individual agents in which there are norm-making properties not attributable to their endeavors (projects, well-defined activities). For example, an affect or emotion untethered to a goal, or purpose, is normatively inert. Think of joy, or free-floating anxiety, experienced in a completely purposeless state. Or think of the recognition, in that purposeless state, that an object is beautiful, or excellent of its kind, or an effective means to some end that is not your own. We are in the normative equivalent of zero gravity in that case. We simply float along, flushing with pleasure, suffering, or appreciating a thing's value. Given some goals, such as the elimination of discomfort, and the possibility of doing that, we can generate norms easily enough. But to have the goals is to have an endeavor. We can find no norms that are untethered to endeavors, and no endeavors that are not facts about individual agents.

Particularity and Truth

Stoic ethics is messy because the social world is messy. We begin (and end) our deliberations in terms of actual human beings, rather than hypothetical, idealized, or schematic ones.² We begin, then, by accepting every norm from every actual agent's actual endeavors as a matter of fact. We accept as matters of fact also any priorities agents attach to the norms from their own endeavors. Moreover, we make no special distinction between the norms our endeavors generate for ourselves (personal ones) and the norms those endeavors generate for others (social ones, whether their scope is local, regional, or universal). My commitment to fidelity may mean that I require it of you as well as myself, but both norms come from an endeavor of mine. They are *my* norms for us both.

FALSE BELIEFS

We do, however, note again and again that by definition, following the facts prohibits following false beliefs about what the facts are. Genocidal projects based on false anthropology are logically unsound, among other things. The same is true of benevolent endeavors based on false beliefs about the needs or wishes of the recipients. And in general, we may put the point this way: if any logically necessary premise in the derivation of a normative proposition is false, the derivation is unsound, and we discard any normative propositions logically implied by assuming (contrary to fact) that all the premises are true.

INCONSISTENCIES AND IMPOSSIBILITIES

There is no a priori guarantee that the normative propositions (soundly) implied at any level *n* by my various endeavors will be logically consistent and thus jointly be possible to follow. For example, a single endeavor

² Thus the streamlining available to the advocates of universal, unconditional, a priori moral norms—the machinery that allows such theorists to rule out of account, from the beginning, a cacophony of actual human projects, such as suicide, sadism, slavery, murder, and lying, that are incompatible with some abstract standard of moral correctness—is not available to stoics. (We gladly leave that machinery to theology and its desiccated successors, such as intuitionism, natural rights theory, and various accounts of pure practical reason, including not only Kantian theories but utilitarian ones as well. Those theoretical enterprises are, as far as we can tell, purely speculative, and whatever normative force they have is due to the fact that some human beings are, as a matter of fact, engaged in these endeavors for the purpose of getting guidance for their conduct.) Human beings in their full particularity have conflicting aims, commitments, and desires. We all have such conflicts with others; most of us have them internally as well. Those are just the facts. Our logic must accommodate them all; it must follow the facts in that sense.

may itself make multiple, jointly unsatisfiable demands, none of which outranks another. Think of the project of giving each of several children an education optimal for intellectual development. Compare that to the project of playing favorites with those children. In the former case, if resources are scarce, the fact that the children are to be treated equally yields jointly unsatisfiable normative propositions, nothing else considered. In the latter case, favoritism “solves” the problem by ranking the competing norms. Stoics make no a priori rulings in favor of endeavors that give complete and determinate priorities for the norms they generate at a given level n . These conflicts are simply a matter of fact.

INTEGRATED AND ISOLATED NORMS

Similarly, it is a matter of fact that two or more of my endeavors may generate conflicting norms at level n . Let us say that endeavors are *integrated* with each other to the extent that the norms from one are hierarchically ordered with respect to the norms from the other, and that they are *isolated* from each other to the extent that their norms are of equal or indeterminate rank with respect to others. Think of the perennial conflict between career and family. It may be that for some people, these two aspects of their lives are so hierarchically arranged that no conflicts arise. But for many this is not so, because for them, in some cases at least, the requirements of their careers are neither superordinate nor subordinate to the requirements of family life. Again, stoics accept such conflicts as matters of fact about n -level norms.

HORIZONTAL INTEGRATION

Endeavors may be integrated horizontally or vertically. In our normative logic, we represent the horizontal variety with ordinal operators ($<$, $>$) and the vertical variety by escalating the subscripts on the normative operators (e.g., from n to $n + 1$). Partial horizontal integration is a very common phenomenon. Let us say that an endeavor is *dictatorial* if its first-order norms have (for the agent) priority over norms from at least one other endeavor, and *tyrannical* if its first-order norms have priority (for the agent) over all other norms.

Etiquette is an interesting example. For many agents, norms of propriety, hospitality, and common courtesy are socially required, not merely personal, and trump those of personal convenience and efficiency, at least at the margin. So etiquette is typically dictatorial in a way that gives an agent partial horizontal integration. In fact it is difficult to find any agent’s project that is not dictatorial with respect to at least one other. But when there is a house fire, etiquette typically yields to safety. The

same is true with most first-order norms that come to mind. So it seems safe to say that partial horizontal integration is a common phenomenon.

Complete horizontal integration requires a tyrannical first-order norm. That is fairly difficult even to imagine, let alone find clear examples of, in carefully described cases. Some short-lived forms of suicidal religious or political zealotry are apparently tyrannical. But when the cases are described carefully, covering a period of days or weeks, it seems hard to make a case for the relentlessly single-minded focus of any of the people involved. Of course this is ultimately an empirical matter, but it seems safe to say that it is hard to find clear cases of tyrannical first-order norms during the deliberative process for any agent. (After the decision is made, the norm selected to act on immediately and temporarily becomes tyrannical in a trivial sense.)

VERTICAL INTEGRATION

Partial vertical integration is also very common. It can be achieved in two ways: First, if conflicting endeavors are embedded in a more comprehensive and controlling one, its norms will dominate. Think of the way staying trim for the sake of one's health is dominated by the more general, schematic project of staying healthy. It would be incoherent to pursue the former in a way that compromised the latter, but not vice versa. The two projects have a common goal, but staying trim is merely one way of trying to stay healthy—a way that does not always work. So when norms from the two come in conflict, such as when one gets medical advice to stop dieting, the norms from the more comprehensive and controlling of the two dominate. We represent that fact by writing them as normative propositions at level $n + 1$. Let us say, then, that endeavor e is more comprehensive and controlling than f for a given agent if and only if (a) they have a common goal and (b) undertaking f instantiates e for the agent—that is, f is, for the agent, a way (or part of a way) of undertaking e . Note that embedding is a matter of fact about particular agents, and not merely an abstract definitional or conceptual matter.

The second source of vertical integration is what we may call reformative assessment. It comes from the fact that some of our endeavors have the purpose of correcting errors in the norms generated by other endeavors. Judicial review of the constitutionality of statutes institutionalizes such assessment. But commentary of many sorts is reformative in this way. Art criticism, copyediting, cost-benefit analysis, ethics, political punditry, psychotherapy . . . all assess the adequacy of other endeavors. Unlike dictatorial projects, which seek to override others, these critical ones seek to improve what they assess. Thus they share (or at least do not attempt to displace) some of the aims and epistemic norms of their targets, and

the norms they generate are meant to supersede others of the target. We represent this by writing them as normative propositions at level $n + 1$.

Practical Reason

Every endeavor, because it seeks an end, poses practical problems for the agent—problems of clarifying and operationalizing the end, finding effective means for reaching the end within the constraints defined by the project, and generating norms of reformative assessment. Solving such practical problems is itself an encompassing project, which we may call practical reason, that is distinct from all others in part because it has a distinct aim (the integration of conflicting endeavors), and in part because, considered formally, as the effort to pursue ends effectively, all other projects are embedded in it. Its distinct aim, of achieving normative integration, is a consequence of its comprehensive, formal aim of implementing projects per se. Isolated endeavors, when they come into normative conflict with others, pose a practical problem that can be solved only by integrating the conflicting norms—by ranking them hierarchically with respect to one another. Without such integration, conflicts bring all the involved activities, including practical reason, to a halt. Like Buridan's Ass, starving to death between piles of hay, the agent is unable to decide what to do. Practical reasoning, if it is to be adequate for its own purposes, then, must be able to integrate all the endeavors it assesses, either horizontally or vertically.

OPTIMIZATION, SEQUENCING, AND MINIMIZATION OF LOSS

Practical reasoning achieves the normative integration of isolated endeavors in terms of its encompassing aim: to achieve success for every one of the agent's projects, over the agent's whole lifetime, and failing that, all but one, or all but two, and so forth. Note that this is not a maximization rule. It is rather an indiscriminate, relentless, implacable effort to implement every project, giving up on as few as possible. It is an optimization or minimization-of-loss rule, where no particular projects are favored a priori. All the agent's endeavors (and relevant facts about other agents and possibilities) are considered in the implementation of each endeavor, in the frame of the agent's life prospects. Thus the norms that practical reason generates are all-things-considered ones: "Given all relevant projects and possibilities throughout my whole life, I ought, now, to do (or be) *c*."

The whole-life frame of reference allows an agent to solve some conflicts merely by sequencing the competing projects. The optimization rule

generates efforts to redefine competing projects (e.g., by integrating them under a more comprehensive one, or by adjusting their norms so as to make them compossible), and to winnow the rest in terms of a preference for those that are most productive for the pursuit of the agent's other actual and potential aims. That much is implicit in the very concept of practical reasoning and is common to it all. We represent these things in our logic with the rules of transcendence and the axioms of encompassment and finality.

DIVERSITY IN PRACTICAL REASONING

The details of the endeavor of practical reasoning vary significantly from agent to agent, however. For example, risk aversion, the discount rate for future prospects, and epistemic norms vary, and all are involved in the effort to integrate norms by sequencing endeavors. The integration a particular agent achieves in her projects, by whatever means, is a norm-generating matter of fact.

Stoic ethics has no a priori commitment to a particular substantive account of practical reasoning, any more than it has an a priori commitment to a particular substantive form of economic analysis. The practical reasoning done by agents is, however, an object of intellectual inquiry about which there is a body of theory that is perpetually under construction, just as economic theory, logic, and mathematics are under development. Stoics follow the best theory they can find, or can construct, in all these matters. But we often disagree with each other about the details and do not confuse theory with a priori truth.

Interpersonal Integration and Isolation

When my endeavor conflicts with yours in a way that makes it impossible for both to proceed, the problem is resolved for both of us if we find that, as a matter of fact, we agree on an interpersonal hierarchical ranking of the norms involved. Suppose I mow my lawn on Sunday mornings, while next door you are trying to achieve serenity, pray, and keep the day holy. If we happen to agree that your project is more important than mine, and thus dictates to mine, our problem is settled. We have interpersonal horizontal integration in that case. If we find that our conflicting Sunday morning endeavors are each embedded in a more encompassing project (tolerance in my case, neighborly love in yours), then we have the basis for another familiar sort of conflict resolution. It is a form of vertical integration to the extent that the encompassing projects are the same, or have "overlapping" elements; otherwise it is horizontal integration at $n + 1$.

Moreover, the reformative assessment directed by the exercise of practical reason may generate norms at level $n + 1$ (for one or both of us) that resolve the issue. (I may find I can costlessly change my lawn-mowing habits, thus avoiding unpleasant encounters with you; or you may find you can shut out the noise in some way that minimizes loss for you.)

Let us say that agents are normatively isolated from each other to the extent that neither one ranks her norms with respect to the norms of the other. Agents are in conflict if their interpersonal rankings do not agree—either because only one of the agents has such a ranking, or because their rankings differ. We will say that agents are normatively integrated to the extent that their interpersonal rankings are complete and congruent. For some agents, achieving such integration is a high priority, and utopians sometimes envision a world (or at least a moral theory) of complete harmony. Others, however, who like to fight, or compete, or be adversarial give normative integration lower priority. These conflicts appear to be endemic to human social life, and stoic ethics has no a priori commitment to achieving a complete integration of interpersonal norms, either in theory or in practice.

Motivated Norms

Motivation is built into our endeavors. To have a project is by that fact to be motivated to act in accord with the aims and constraints that define the project. Projects lapse, wax, and wane; they are adopted, postponed, subordinated, and abandoned; they are pursued wholeheartedly, half-heartedly, or in name only. Our motivation varies accordingly. The point is simply that the norms implicit in our endeavors are norms that we are by that fact motivated to follow. The motivation comes from two sources: from engaging in the endeavor itself, and from endeavoring to construct normative propositions from it. Almost all norms are motivated for the relevant agents in these ways (exceptions are discussed below under the heading “Heteronomous motivation”), since they are almost all tied to facts about the agents’ own endeavors, and the exceptions, insofar as we exercise our agency with regard to them, are inevitably brought into our endeavors. The picture is more complex and problematic than this blunt description suggests, however.

Matched and Mismatched Motives

One such complexity arises from the way our projects may be unsettled by the process of constructing normative propositions about them.

Sometimes, rather than being moved to follow the normative propositions we construct, we are moved to adjust or abandon the project, or adjust the logic of norm construction in order to get normative propositions we can accept. Sometimes we abandon the process of norm construction in order to do what we please. And in other cases we may be unable to resolve the problem at all—unable to give up norm construction, unable to follow the normative propositions we do construct, and unable to adjust our projects or the logic of norm construction to bring these things into accord. This suggests that there is no logical connection between pursuing a project (thus having its constitutive motivation) and being motivated to act in accord with the normative propositions that represent it.

The suggestion is misleading. The story about motivation becomes complicated only because the story about agents pursuing a project becomes complicated when they reflect on it and make explicit to themselves a propositional representation of its norms. When they do that, they may as a consequence (deliberately or not) refuse to accept or act in accord with the propositional representations of the norms, or simply find that they have no interest in acting on them. In that case the propositions are no longer (if they ever were) accurate representations of the normative aspects of their project. This may be so because they have made an error in constructing the normative propositions. But more interestingly, it may be so because the project they are trying to represent in normative language (or the project of representing them itself) has shifted—has been changed as a consequence of their getting, or reflecting on, an explicit propositional representation of it.

The psychology of such reflexive transformation, fascinating as it may be, is not the issue here. We simply note that the norms we are concerned with are always matters of fact about agents' actual endeavors. When an endeavor is accurately represented in normative propositions, the motive constitutive of pursuing the endeavor will by that fact be a motive to act in the way represented by those normative propositions—a motive to act in accord with them. And when, for whatever reason, the normative propositions do not accurately represent the project, the motive internal to the endeavor will not be a motive to act in accord with them.

There is a further complication of some interest: even when the normative propositions we construct from an endeavor do not accurately represent it, we may be motivated to follow what turns out to be better ones by accident, as it were.

Think of a teenage boy in a new high school. He is a good student. He especially likes history. He loves tennis because his father is a good player and thinks his son is getting good at tennis also. He hates football because his mother hates football. He loves the outdoor life, and working on his uncle's farm in Southern California, close to where he used to live.

And somewhere in all this, he thinks, is the explanation for why he was able to be a member in good standing of the loose association of interesting people in his class at the old high school. He is determined to make the same thing work in his new high school in New England.

So he presents his credentials carefully, without being pushy. But it is hard. It's a city school. There is no tennis team, and no one seems to get interested. There is a football team, but he makes no effort to disguise his lack of interest in anything related to football. People seem interested in his stories, however, and about the out-of-doors life on a ranch. But otherwise they leave him alone. He has failed to find the sort of friends he wants. So he decides to be a rebel. A mild one, because he loves his mother.

There is a dress code at the new school. Uniforms. In speech class he is scheduled to give a four-minute talk about the history of something. His choice. He puts together an outfit that looks like what male tennis players had to wear at Wimbledon in the 1930s. White shirts and slacks, and white shoes. No embellishment. He borrows an antique tennis racket. He goes to school and feels the gathering movement among the teachers to report him for a dress code violation. The students are standing off a little bit. He becomes convinced he has failed. He decides to emphasize rebellion rather than tennis from here on.

When he goes to speech class, he discards the speech he was going to give and gives a quiet, impromptu talk about the history of meaningless social conventions, including dress codes. At the end of it, he steps out from behind the podium, points to his outfit, and identifies it as conventional—for the 1930s, in England, for tennis. Afterward, it is clear he has succeeded. Lots of thumbs up. Comments about how droll he is. The tension about his violation of the dress code evaporates. The student newspaper wants a copy of his talk. He's in. By accident. He decides to cultivate being droll rather than being rebellious. He continues to play tennis, but he doesn't talk about it. He gets better and better at being droll. It eventually becomes one of his defining traits.

This illustrates a more general point. The normative propositions we construct for a given endeavor may or may not accurately represent its norms and thus carry (or not) the appropriate motivation internal to it. But they do accurately represent the norms of another distinct endeavor: the very process of getting good at constructing norms for a given endeavor. So they will carry the motivation internal to *that*, and that turns out to be an important factor in moral development. *It turns out to motivate a recursive process that transforms rational agency itself.*

Normative propositions at $n + 1$, and those that are unsubscripted (all things considered), often have this recursive, transformative property. When they match (ratify, repeat) the lower-order norms of some other

endeavor e , then we have two sources of motivation to follow e . But when rational assessment, or norm construction, generates normative propositions that do *not* accurately represent e , we have three sets of motivated norms in play for e —its own, those constructed for it by a separate endeavor, and those of the process of getting good at constructing norms for endeavors generally.

The normative logic outlined in the appendix contains determinate rules for dealing with mismatched norms. To the extent that our logic accurately represents an endeavor of norm construction and assessment that people actually pursue, they will, by that fact, be motivated to resolve mismatches in the way outlined. But there is no a priori guarantee that the logic is descriptively accurate for everyone, and thus no guarantee that the motivational structure implicit in it will be universally or even widely applicable. Moreover, people may be motivated by the general nature of the endeavor described by the logic (or parts of it), but not by all its details—for example, by the specifically stoic elements. We hold, however, that there is good reason to believe that the logic, even its stoic elements, is widely accurate as a description of the way practical reasoning operates in people's lives. Moreover, we hold that it generates a recommendation for itself, and on that basis, stoics recommend it to others. More argument for this will be given in the following sections, and in chapters 6 and 7.

Motivated Moral Theory

Observation suggests that ad hoc practical reasoning, of a sort that involves conditional inferences, generalization, and error-correction routines, is built into human agents. The neurological capacity and propensity to process information in an instrumentally effective (and logically sound) way is evident very early in infancy and appears to be a feature of early physiological development. Absent catastrophic limitations in our human endowments or circumstances, then—limitations of a sort that diminish or eliminate agency itself—we come equipped with, and use, logic circuits at a subconscious level, and we persist in doing so throughout our lives, much as we come equipped with and use the ability to register information through our senses. Moreover, as we acquire language, some of our subconscious information processing develops into (or perhaps is represented in) conscious instrumental reasoning in which we represent and process information about means and ends propositionally and enter into what we have called the reformative assessment of our various projects. In the normal course of events, then, agents generate for themselves not only level- n normative propositions but many at $n + 1$ as well, and

thus some ad hoc conceptual integration, both personal and interpersonal. Insofar as such reflection is one of the agent's projects, the integrative norms that it generates are motivated.

Furthermore, instrumental reasoning is reflexive: we can think of it as an endeavor, apply it to itself, and construct an account of its own norms. Observation also suggests that agents regularly develop, as they mature, a rough, incomplete, perhaps incoherent normative logic that they regularly use and refine. Moreover, through the iterative process of refining both the normative logic they use and the normative propositions they construct with it, many agents construct at least fragments of what might be called a normative theory—a representation of their practical reasoning in terms of formal rules of inference and assumptions, and a representation of the norms of their endeavors in terms of formal or schematic principles that more concrete normative propositions instantiate. Agents may thus introduce considerable (motivated) abstraction into their practices.

People differ considerably from one another, however, in the extent to which they follow this iterative process into its sweet theoretical reaches, and they appear to differ also in the degree to which they are motivated by the abstractions they construct from their projects, or recognize as constructable from them. After all, pursued in a thoroughgoing way, such theoretical reflection aims not only to solve ad hoc practical problems as they arise in daily life but to anticipate such problems, to take prophylactic measures to avoid them, and to represent those solutions in a logically coherent, comprehensive account of the way the agent's norms are ordered.

In short, if one pursues practical reasoning in a thoroughgoing way, one aims at constructing a general theory of the normative elements of one's life all things considered—that is, a moral theory of one's life. The next step is to represent one's own life as an instance of a type, and to construct a moral theory for that type of life. Types of lives may then be considered as various ways in which moral agency itself may be expressed. And when one has reached the issue of normative propositions for the life of an agent as such, one has reached a form of universal moral theory.

A Developmental Account of Moral Motivation

Stoics in antiquity outlined the way they thought agents came to be motivated by universal moral theory in the sense just described. Their outline, reported in a compact way by Cicero in *De Finibus*, 3.vff., is roughly consistent with contemporary developmental psychology and is worth

restating so as to remove unwarranted universalistic and metaphysical implications. This restatement will return in greater detail in chapter 6.

The outline begins with a thesis about the psychological primacy of narrow self-interest. The ancient Stoics expressed this in terms of the infant's feeling of "attachment" for itself, impulse to preserve itself, and feelings of affection or antipathy for things according to whether they appear to help or hinder self-preservation. This sort of self-interest was distinguished sharply from mere pleasure seeking or pain avoidance of the sort Epicureans took to be primary. Here we will restate the point in terms of psychological egoism, without confining it to self-preservation. The outline has five steps.

First step. As infants we begin as thoroughly egocentric creatures, acting to satisfy our primal needs, drives, and impulses—including curiosity and various forms of sociability, playfulness, and task accomplishment. We become attached to things that satisfy us, and motivated to get and keep such satisfying things; we become averse to things that dissatisfy us, and motivated to avoid them. To the extent that we experience a world that is generally satisfying, unthreatening, and predictable, we develop a basically trusting, confident, optimistic disposition. To the extent that our world is generally unsatisfying, threatening, and unpredictable, we develop a basically distrustful, anxious, pessimistic disposition. The psychological process involved here is one of "appropriation," or "attachment," or "making something our own" (*oikeiōsis* in ancient Stoic lingo), and it is central to every subsequent development.

Second step. Our affection for the things that satisfy our primal interests often becomes more or less independent, causally, from the things' ability to satisfy us. In antiquity there was a tendency to express this point by saying that we come to love such objects "for their own sakes." Another way to put it is to say that our egoistic affections and motivations become dispositional, and that those dispositions persist even when they no longer serve to satisfy the sort of primal self-interest that generated them. Thus our affections and motivations undergo a dramatic complication. The projects we are motivated to pursue (our interests and well-being in a wider sense) come to include not only the satisfaction of our primal needs, drives, and impulses, but the satisfaction of derivative ones that involve the creation, preservation, or enhancement of things that either impede primal need satisfaction or have no effect on it one way or the other. Thus primal needs for safety, food, comfort, social intercourse, and the like compete, for satisfaction, with needs to hold on to things that once did but no longer do satisfy those primal needs (at least not in every instance).

Third step. Knowledge is among the objects for which we develop a derivative, independent (widely self-interested) affection. We pursue it

initially for its instrumental value in solving our immediate practical needs (including the satisfaction of curiosity, the resolution of perplexity, and the reduction of anxiety), but it soon becomes an object of independent interest. We are attracted to it, and to endeavors that generate it, independently of their connection to our narrowly egoistic concerns. We are repelled by error, ignorance, and falsehood. Modern studies of cognitive development, especially language acquisition, provide ample evidence of this.

Fourth step. Learning to translate all this into “appropriate acts” in the stoic sense is itself a complicated process. Here the ancient Stoics spoke more explicitly in terms of additional developmental steps, which may be restated for present purposes in this way: We move from ad hoc, narrowly self-interested pursuits to ad hoc, widely self-interested pursuits (including the pursuit of knowledge), and thence to the discovery of regularities in the way things work. From these materials we formulate rules of conduct and principles of choice, which we begin to test in action. Over time, as we refine such rules and principles and use them instrumentally with increasing success, we become attached to conditioning our choices on our concept of “appropriateness”—that is, on their conformity to the rules and principles we construct. Acting appropriately (acting on principle) thus becomes for us an interest that motivates our conduct more or less independently of its effect on the pursuit of our other interests.

Studies of cognitive development confirm the general accuracy of this as a (vague) description of an important feature of normal human maturation but give us reason to be cautious in its use. In particular, we should note that mature individuals may vary widely in the strength and character of their “affection” for the pursuit of knowledge, and in their independent interest in acting on principle. We should be wary of interpreting this outline either as an account of rigidly sequential stages or as an endorsement of the idea that maturational progress is directly correlated, increment by increment, to strengthening an independent interest in acting on principle. It is nonetheless true, however, that in some individuals these normal developmental processes can (in psychological theory) motivate the pursuit of the most abstract sort of moral theory. Think of the ancient Stoics themselves, for example.

Fifth step. Through the operation of the ordinary, conscious psychological processes we call practical reasoning, together with the process of appropriation (*oikeiōsis*), we can come to have an independent interest in moral virtue and good as such. Even those most abstract, intellectualized norms can be motivated, and motivated strongly enough to order or override primal impulses.

Does this mean that all agents become so motivated? No. Nor does it mean that all agents who are so motivated have acquired the motivation

in this way. For one thing, the extent to which such motivation can be traced to conscious, intellectualized processes varies from individual to individual. And it may be that for many people, some or all of their most abstract norms are “heteronomous”—imperatives internalized from the categorical instructions of others, for example. (See the next section.) The point is simply that agents *can* generate such motivated norms autonomously. Stoics have an affection for self-control—for autonomy rather than heteronomy—but the argument for cultivating that affection will come in the chapter on virtue.

Heteronomous Motivation: Orphan and Alien Norms

Often we internalize norms when we are children (say, a prohibition on going to the movies on Sunday) that are part of the “project” of placating our parents—norms we conform to long after we have stopped trying to placate our parents at all, or at least to placate them in that way. Such vestigial or “orphaned” norms, untethered to the endeavors that generated them, may nonetheless continue to function as strong and exceedingly complex prohibitions, requirements, standards, ideals, or commitments. (We may feel a slight, transgressive thrill in going to the movies on Sunday afternoon, long after we have given up going to church on Sunday morning.)

Any endeavor that we abandon or redefine can leave us with orphan norms in this way if we have pursued it to the point that acting in accord with its norms has become habitual or dispositional. The original endeavor disappears, leaving a residue of habit stripped of its original aim. In some cases we adopt these orphans into new endeavors—into an elaborate way of remembering or respecting the dead, for example, or of indulging in nostalgia, or of making arbitrary choices—in which case they cease to be orphans. In other cases they remain in their reduced state, and insofar as they intrude on our more elaborate projects, they are a source of charming caprice, stubborn adherence to habit, or not-so-charming neurosis.

There is a parallel in what happens with what we may call “alien” norms—those we internalize from the precepts or examples of authority figures, for instance (“Don’t ever do that again!”), or from the rules or ideals we draw from traumatic or otherwise extraordinary experience. Sometimes we “naturalize” such norms by incorporating them into one or more of our other endeavors, in which case they cease to be alien. In other cases they remain unincorporated but resident, motivated prohibitions, requirements, standards, ideals, or commitments—or a source of neurotic feelings of guilt or shame.

Both orphan and alien norms seem in a sense to govern our conduct from outside the normative logic of our endeavors. When we represent them in that logic and must specify the endeavors from which the relevant normative propositions can be constructed, we find only a disappointing identity here: the endeavors behind the orphan or alien norms are simply identical to the norms themselves. The norms are not implicit in any project other than that constituted by their own normativity (motivational direction and momentum). Thus, insofar as that bare normativity remains orphaned or alien, it appears to come from outside any active endeavors that are genuinely our own. We may thus be tempted to regard such norms as heteronomous in the sense that the normative propositions that represent them cannot be constructed in the usual way. We would then regard a norm as autonomous if and only if it were implicit in one of our projects that was not simply identical to its own normativity.

Stoics think this worry is resolved by the way in which the practice of “following the facts” captures such norms. The legitimacy of the label “heteronomous” aside, such norms are facts, and stoics do not ignore them. To “follow” such facts about one’s life, however, is to be an agent with respect to them, and that involves recognizing them for what they are, no more or less. But to be an agent with respect to an orphan or alien norm is to embark on a project in which it will either be adopted or be replaced.

Consider the logical possibilities for agency here: (a) One is to resist the norm’s motive force (reject it), thus adopting an endeavor whose aim is to resist, and in which the resisted norm is replaced by its contrary or contradictory. (b) Another is to ratify the norm’s motive force (assent to it), thus adopting it into an endeavor whose aim is to act in accord with it. (c) A third is neither to resist nor to ratify, reject or assent, thus adopting an endeavor whose aim is to withhold both rejection and assent, and in which the orphan or alien is replaced either by a norm of indifference or by a conditional norm in which final judgment is explicitly reserved. (d) The last of the logical possibilities is to do some more or less complex combination of a–c. In every case the putatively heteronomous norm is incorporated in the usual way into the normative logic of our endeavors.

Heteronomous Endeavors, Autonomous Agency, and Freedom

We have considered the view that an agent’s norms are autonomous if and only if the normative propositions that represent them are constructed (or constructable) from the features of that agent’s own actual endeavors. We have argued that putatively heteronomous norms inevitably become, or are replaced by, autonomous ones when we exercise our agency with

respect to them. But what of our ends or endeavors themselves? What of our agency? Some of our ends are autonomous in the sense that (like our genotypes) they are simply constitutive of our agency. Primal, impulse-driven, egoistic activity is an example, and so is a primitive form of practical reasoning. Other endeavors are autonomous in the sense that (like our adult bodies) they are the product of the growth and development of our natural endowments—in this case, of the interaction of the constitutive features of our agency (e.g., conflicting primal impulses ordered by primitive practical reasoning), or of the exercise of our agency either on them or on the external world.

There are two troubling ideas raised by this picture, however. One is that many of our endeavors appear not to be autonomous in either sense, but rather to be imposed on us from sources external to us. If so, then they are in a fairly strong sense not our own endeavors, and thus perhaps not something that should be represented in our normative logic in the same way as autonomous ones. The other troubling idea is that the whole notion of autonomy might founder on the question of agency. To the extent that autonomous endeavors are simply the determinate products of our natural endowments and circumstances, there might be no significant difference, in terms of human freedom and responsibility, between having heteronomous endeavors and having autonomous ones. Indeed, the response to the first issue shifts the whole burden onto the second.

Heteronomous Ends

Any project we deliberately adopt by the exercise of our agency—that is, through carrying out some autonomous endeavor to adopt it—meets the criterion for autonomous norms. We can construct the normative propositions that represent its norms (including its ends) via the normative logic of our endeavors. Some projects do not meet that criterion, however. We acquire some of our ends unwittingly, blotting them up from parents or peers through complex learning processes (e.g., classical or operant conditioning, imitation, suggestion, submission to demands) that are largely subliminal forms of appropriation. Moreover, even when we are aware that we are being manipulated or conditioned into appropriating such ends, we may nonetheless feel compelled to adopt them. We may acquire a whole ordered set of projects—even a “vocation”—in this way. These are troubling to us as agents when we reflect on the way such heteronomous endeavors may defeat or control the successful exercise of our agency.

Stoics hold, however, that when we exercise our agency on heteronomous ends, endeavors, ordered sets of endeavors, or even a vocation or

way of life, we inevitably convert heteronomy to autonomy—just as in the case of isolated heteronomous norms. We have the same four possibilities for the exercise of our agency: to endeavor to reject the alien thing, to accept it, to do neither, or to do some mixture of the three. All the possibilities either incorporate the alien endeavor into an autonomous one or replace it with an autonomous one. The question that remains is whether our agency is itself autonomous—whether its exercise is within its own control.

Autonomous Agency

Stoics hold that agency defines autonomy. Its every exercise is self-transformative in the sense that it captures a set of data (that which is given) and forms it into something new—for example, a discrete experience, a perception, a preference, an endeavor, a normative construct. Agency is itself a datum, a given, but when conscious of itself, it operates transformatively on itself as well—capturing in self-consciousness a set of data about its operations and forming the data into something new, such as a self-concept, a self-image, a proprietary personal space, an endeavor about its own operations, or a logic representing those operations. In that sense agency governs or transforms everything it is given to work with, itself included. That, it seems to us, is the very definition of autonomy.

Stoics also hold that agency, like all the other properties of an individual, is generated by a deterministic process and operates deterministically. That is, we hold that whether a given human being is an agent at all, or has agency with certain specific powers, is a contingent matter, wholly dependent on an elaborate conjunction of antecedent conditions. If those antecedent conditions occur, the agency will occur.

Some might think that this somehow undermines the claim that agency defines autonomy, since by stringing together a series of transitive conditionals we can create the impression that agency is no different from, say, our digestive processes. Digestion, too, operates on what it is given and transforms some of it (the digestible items) into something new. It can transform itself, too, as in the case of ulcers, or indigestion, or gastric reflux. And of course like agency, digestion is a deterministic process. It is true of both that if certain antecedent events occur, we have them, and then if we have them, certain consequences follow from that, and so on. The thought is that there is nothing autonomous in either case, since both processes arise and operate only as the determinate products of antecedent causes, and their consequences are transitively determinate products of the same antecedents.

This line of thought raises three interesting questions. Leaving aside, for the moment, whether anything we do is accurately described as autonomous, one question is whether agency has a better claim than other elements of our constitution to be identified with autonomy. Another is whether agency, when exercised, is always controlling (*nomic*), let alone *autonomic*. The third is whether the notions of determinism and autonomy are compatible. We address the first here, and the others in subsequent sections.

On the issue of which of our powers, if any, might plausibly be identified with autonomy, we fail to see how similarities among them undermine the crucial difference between agency and the rest. To carry on with the amusing example, digestion is limited to the digestible and transforms only that. Presumably (though some of us can stomach it better than others) agency is not a digestible thing. Nothing, however, is so-to-speak unagentable for agency. The scope of its operation is in principle unlimited, though of course it does not do the same work as other elements of our nature. Thus, though indigestion may occasionally disturb or distort agency, and the digestion of hemlock may abruptly terminate it, agency is the more comprehensive process. Unlike our other constitutive powers (digestion, sensory apparatus, cardiovascular system, and so forth), agency can be exercised on any object, and its exercise always has a self-transformative effect. It cannot replace our other powers, but it can always in principle operate transformatively on them all and on itself. Its identification with the notion of autonomy is warranted.

WEAK AGENCY

It is clear, however, that what agency can do in principle it does not always do in practice. This should not be surprising, since fully developed agency is perhaps the most complex of our constitutive powers. To see that the traditional problem of weakness of “will” is only part of the problem of weak agency, we need only consider a very sketchy account of its development.

Begin with our genetic endowments, as initially expressed in the constitutive powers of an infant. Just as one infant’s sensory powers may differ widely from another’s, so too there may be great variation in their hardwired conative powers—their (nondeliberative) ability and propensity to process their primal impulses into goal-oriented activities, to register and process information in a way that accurately identifies means for achieving those goals, to select one goal from among competing ones, to select one means from those available, and to stay focused on the ones selected and pursue them. Like its sensory apparatus, an infant’s

hardwired conative powers can be reduced or eliminated by neurological damage. Like its primal impulses, the infant's conation is transformed by conditioning and other psychodynamic processes—in ways that introduce additional variation among individuals, especially perhaps in matters connected to the development of basic psychological “tenors,” or dispositions, such as anxiety, trust, optimism, quiescence, risk aversion, aggression, and so forth. Those recursive psychodynamic processes operate throughout our lives and, coupled with the acquisition of language and the development and exercise of our cognitive and nondeliberative conative powers, typically transform conation into a conscious and deliberative, as well as nondeliberative, power.

Whether this transformation increases or decreases variation among individuals is a nice empirical question. The linguistic representation of the logic of our deliberative processes (by those who attend to this project seriously) has certainly become quite uniform at its core, and perhaps it is the case that it represents phenomena that are equally uniform, formally. But it is obvious that there are great variations in the extent to which we exercise our agency, and exercise it in deliberation; great variations in the objects upon which we exercise it, and the salience of those objects for us; great variations in the extent to which our actions are conditioned on conscious choice, our choices are conditioned on deliberation, and our deliberation is thorough. At each of those junctures agency may function very weakly or not at all relative to our other constitutive powers. Weakness of will, understood narrowly as the extent to which action is conditioned on choice (or even deliberation and choice), is only a small part of the issue of weak agency.

A further empirical question is the extent to which agency is robust, regenerative, and self-corrective with respect to the operations of other physical and psychological processes. We know that addictions, for example, deform our deliberative powers, particularly at the juncture between deliberation and choice. We know fear and anxiety (and complex adaptations to traumatic experience) can severely inhibit deliberation—even in extreme cases apparently extinguish agency altogether, as in catatonia. We know that some kinds of neurological damage, and routine forms of conditioning, introduce systematic errors into our deliberations—both perceptual and logical errors, prejudices, and fallacious patterns of inference.

Stoics hypothesize that agency is very robust, meaning (a) that it is, in any form, highly resistant to extinction through other psychological processes; (b) that when exercised at all, no matter how weakly in relation to our other constitutive powers, it tends to increase its relative strength; and (c) that agency can thus become in material effect, through its own exercise, the most comprehensive and controlling of our constitutive

powers—one that is characterized by the form of practical reasoning all things considered that we represent as moral reasoning in our normative logic. We hypothesize that agency is regenerative, meaning (d) that when extinguished (by physical or psychological trauma short of death or permanent coma) it is highly likely to be rebootable, and in some cases to reboot spontaneously. We hypothesize that it is self-corrective, meaning (e) that when it develops systematic errors, they tend to be reduced or corrected, rather than increased, by its further exercise. It should be emphasized that these are put forward as empirical hypotheses, not a priori truths. We believe they are plausible, given current findings in neurophysiology and psychology, but it is clear that, should they be falsified, we would have to rethink many matters.

DETERMINISM

We hold that human freedom consists in the exercise of agency. We hold that agency is the determinate product of antecedent events and that its exercise has determinate outcomes. And our logic of descriptive bases is bivalent: all its propositions are either true or false, and not both or neither. Critics have held that we are thus committed to fatalism, or at least to a form of determinism incompatible with human freedom. Some stoics have (perhaps for rhetorical purposes) mistakenly agreed. The candid response is that we simply do not see any plausibility in either of these criticisms.

We are certainly not categorical fatalists. Fatalism of that sort holds that every categorical proposition about the future is either true or false, period. Whatever will be, will be, no matter what. Such a doctrine leaves out the determinate effect of antecedent events altogether. In our view, many truths about the future are truths about events that will occur as the determinate result of antecedent events and are thus implicit conditionals: if such and such happens, then so and so happens. That is very far from the idea that so and so will happen no matter what antecedent events occur.

The remaining charge, however, is that such determinism (or conditionalized fatalism) leaves no possibility for anything to happen other than what does happen. We demur here also, by calling attention to the way we interpret the notions of necessity and possibility. As indicated in the chapter on logic, we interpret necessity in terms of logical truth—specifically the logical truth of material conditionals in a specified universe of discourse (e.g., an unrestricted, theoretical, or practical discourse). To say that, given certain antecedent events, a certain consequent event must occur (could not have been otherwise), is to say that the corresponding material conditional is logically true in a specified universe of discourse.

That is, it is to say that the conditional $A \supset C$ is always true in the specified domain when A is the conjunction of propositions representing the antecedent conditions and C is the proposition representing the consequent event. That is our concept of necessary connection, causation, determined events. Note that by itself it does not imply that the only logically true conditional with C as its consequent is $A \supset C$; nor does it imply that whenever C is true some conditional of that sort is logically true.

AGENCY MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN THE DETERMINISTIC STORY

It is clear, of course, that most causal chains in the universe do not run through any human being's agency. Such agency was not involved in the antecedent conditions that created our sun and its planets, for example, or in the long process of evolution that created human beings. In those cases we have straightforward conditional descriptions of causal chains, say, $A \supset C$. But in other cases, causal chains *do* run through the agency of particular human individuals and must therefore be represented in a complete description of both the antecedents and consequents that describe the events involved. In those cases we no longer have causal conditionals of the form $A \supset C$, then, but $A' \supset C'$.

The decisive point is just this: the insertion of our agency into the deterministic causal story makes a difference even if $A' \supset C'$ is otherwise indistinguishable from $A \supset C$. For one thing, we now have at least contributory causal responsibility for the events involved. We "own" them, so to speak, in a way that might make us legally or morally responsible for them. For another, that exercise of our agency has recursive effects on itself. We have been there; we have done that. We have been held responsible or not. And all of that has consequences for our agency itself.

INDETERMINISM

Our view until the arrival of quantum mechanics was that all events were the determinate products of some particular set of antecedents. We now follow physicists in rejecting that unrestricted claim, but since we still hold that determinism is true about the genesis and operations of human agency, we are still apparently subject to the charge that human freedom cannot consist in the exercise of agency.

To this we respond with three by now familiar observations. The first is that if freedom is taken to mean indeterminacy, then it means that anything that occurs freely cannot be represented as the consequent of a logically true conditional of the sort represented above by $A \supset C$. Thus it would follow that if it is true that some free human act will occur tomorrow, it is true that it will occur *no matter what its antecedents*.

That is categorical fatalism again, and not a happy result for defenders of freedom.

The second observation is that it will not help to give up bivalence and to suppose that statements about our future acts are neither true nor false. That assumption, combined with freedom interpreted as indeterminacy, merely restricts categorical fatalism to the past and present: every free act that occurs, occurs no matter what its antecedents were. Thus, for example, on that view, free acts are not conditioned on deliberation and choice—or if both those things are included in the definition of an action, then free acts in this expanded sense are not conditioned on the states of affairs that ratify the beliefs involved in deliberation. Deliberation, and thus freedom, is untethered to information. This sort of fatalism is no less problematic for freedom than the first sort.

The third observation is simply that we can avoid fatalism of both sorts by taking human freedom to consist in the determinative effect we have, through the exercise of our agency, on what happens in our lives—including *what happens with regard to the exercise of our agency itself*. Without our agency, things happen independently of our desires, preferences, and purposes, whether as the product of antecedent conditions or not. Through the exercise of our agency, insofar as it has determinate effects, events are conditioned on our desires, aims, deliberation, and choice. Since we imagine that deliberation and choice are themselves the products of antecedent events, we concede that the choices we make (or do not make) are necessary in the sense we have outlined. In that sense, each step we take by means of our agency is determined transitively by antecedents to it, and working forward by stepwise induction, there is only one journey via our agency that is possible for us—the journey defined by the complete series of steps necessitated by it and its antecedent conditions.

Notice that this is not at all conducive to the erroneous idea that somehow our destinies are fixed by particular, isolated events in the distant past. Conditional fatalism thrives on that idea, feeding despair about the power of our agency to determine our conduct. But human bodies adjust moment by moment to changes in the environment—changes in temperature, light, background noise, microbes—and continue to function, often without discernable effects at the level of our gross motor activity, sometimes with discernable but trivial effects. Human agency has equally powerful adjustment mechanisms, and the causal story of what we are doing at a particular moment can never be given in terms of a few isolated events. Rather, the story of what we are doing at a particular moment is the story of one causal thread of our whole lives to that point. (More grandly, one causal thread of the universe.) Some such threads involve the processes described as the exercise of agency, and others do not. Insofar

as agency is not a causal factor, what we do is not conditioned on our conscious pursuit of ends.

We certainly agree that such a life is not radically autonomous, or free from antecedent conditions. But consider, now, two alternatives: on the one hand a life in which agency plays no causal role, and on the other a life in which agency plays a persistent and pervasive part in the causal story of its every waking moment. We stoics simply report that we prefer our lives to be of the second sort and find the idea of that kind of life more than sufficient to assuage our longing for autonomy and metaphysical liberty.

RESPONSIBILITY

Moreover, we are not dismayed by the conception of (moral) responsibility that is implicit in this deterministic picture of the world. It is simply this: agents are fully responsible for their acts if and only if they (a) are aware of what they are doing; (b) are aware of the causes of their actions; (c) assent to acting in those ways from those causes—that is, are acting in accord with norms they recognize as their own; (d) are aware of the causes of their assent—that is, the causes of their own norms; (e) thereby introduce new causal factors into the determination of their actions through their awareness of the causal conditions that shape it; (f) are aware of this iterative, self-transformative causal process; and (g) assent to that, in the sense that they recognize that this process is normative for them.

This account of responsibility locates it squarely “inside” the agent—within a particular constellation of abilities that agents may or may not have. On this account, when the responsibility of an agent is diminished—when to some degree he lacks these abilities—then to that degree his conduct is determined by external factors operating either directly or only through his primal agency. When he is fully responsible (fully an agent), however, then his conduct is determined by his agency acting on, through, and in terms of its primal elements and factors external to it. We have sometimes expressed this by making a distinction between things that are “up to the agent” (within the agent’s control) and things that are not. This is probably a tactical error, for it erroneously suggests a paradox to our critics. They charge that on the one hand we assert that everything operates deterministically, while on the other we assert that agents somehow stand outside the causal chain of events and have some sort of radical (undefined) autonomy with respect to it. As should now be clear, we do not assert the second part of that at all. Rather, we assert that the agency generated in some links of the cosmic causal chain has remarkable causal powers *within* that chain, and that the remarkable causal powers

outlined in (a)–(g) above can quite plausibly be the basis for saying that an *agent* (and not something else) is responsible for his acts. There is no paradox in that position.

A FREE LIFE WITHOUT METAPHYSICAL LIBERTY

We despair of finding a way to say more to solve the riddle of determinism for people who are attracted to it. We are not attracted to it in the least. In the final analysis, perhaps, the reason for our lack of interest in it comes from our view that a life without metaphysical liberty can still be a life of undiminished virtue and happiness. If that is true, then given the aims of stoic ethics, what remains of the riddle of determinism is of no ultimate importance. Here is one line of argument for that conclusion.

Negative liberty is the absence of impediments to action. Positive liberty is the presence of the means necessary for effective choice and action. So conceived, negative liberty is not a “thing,” but rather the absence of something. It is like the hole in a doughnut; take away the doughnut and it is hard to see the hole at all, let alone regard it as valuable; take away the impediments to action, and negative liberty as an “object” vanishes with them. So it may be wise to organize a discussion of the value of negative liberty by beginning with *things*, rather than the spaces they leave—in this case by looking at the impediments rather than at the space those impediments define. When we do that, it is clear that among impediments, as among doughnuts, some are good and some are bad, from the user’s point of view. The friction caused by an obstacle is sometimes a necessary condition for doing what we want to do, and when it is, we see the obstacle as valuable. In fact, valuable impediments provide us with another sort of liberty—positive or material liberty. If the impediment is a good one, the corresponding negative liberty—or absence of the impediment—is derivatively bad. We should be able to learn all we need to know about the derivative values of derivative things (such as holes and other spaces) by immediate inference from the things that define them.

Positive liberty, by contrast, is not the absence of something but rather the presence of it: the presence, indeed the possession, of the means necessary for action. It is the “stuff” we require in order to act in the space provided by negative liberty. The presence of social and political institutions gives us some of the means—the liberty—to lead lives that we could not otherwise have. So do friends, courage, physical strength. We ordinarily resist labeling such things as liberty, but the description of economic resources, education, and many other things as “liberating” is surely a warrant for the label, and it is unassailable that negative liberty alone is of very little importance unless one can or might be able to use it.

For using it, some resources (psychological and physical) are necessary, and we may plausibly speak of them as constituting our positive or material liberty.

Now consider the question of whether liberty of either sort is a necessary condition for a good life. Why should it be? Suppose my name is Calvin, and suppose that my creator has predestined every detail of my life, every nuance of my thought and action, including the fact that through theological study I have now discovered that my life is predetermined. Does this mean that I have not had a good life to this point, or that I cannot continue to have one? I have no genuine liberty at all to do anything other than what God has planned for me. I am, in effect, a total slave to God. But I certainly *think* I have a good life. I remember, and feel, and feel joy, anticipation, fear, responsibility, pride, guilt, shame, and obligation. I fear judgment. I do not know how things will turn out for me, but I suspect I am one of the elect and am glad for that. In any case, I know that whatever happens, it will be exactly as God has planned. In the meantime, I will live the life that I have been given. Given God's will, nothing else could have happened. I was never at liberty to do other than I did in fact do. I had a life without liberty. But I rejoice in it and affirm it anew every day.

End of story. Now what is wrong with it? It surely does not suggest that we cannot have good lives without liberty. Negative liberty, in general terms, is the space left to us by the political, social, personal, and metaphysical impediments that surround us; positive liberty is the stuff that enables us to act in that space. What Calvin imagines is that *the space and stuff available to him are enough for exactly one life*—the one God has given him to live, without liberty.

Enough for one life is enough.

Commentary

Naturalism. The sense in which stoicism, and ancient Greek ethical theories generally, are forms of ethical naturalism, is described succinctly in Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (135ff.). She notes that if we define naturalism by contrasting it with intuitionism, and draw that contrast in terms of whether the theory treats moral terms and properties as definable in or reducible to nonmoral ones, then treating ancient moral theories as naturalistic is problematic at best. But she continues:

Ethical naturalism can of course be taken more generously. . . . If we reject the demand to be reductive . . . we can still be left with something that can fairly be called ethical naturalism, namely a position which insists on grounding ethical claims in facts about nature that support those ethical claims. This is general enough to form a spectrum of positions, of which reductive versions would merely form one extreme. (136)

The version of stoicism described here does not offer a reductive account of meaning or concept formation, for example, in a way that follows the early logical positivists. But in one respect it does advance a form of naturalism that is closer to a reductive extreme than some will find comfortable, for it does insist that normative propositions can be soundly constructed only from facts about the purposive endeavors of agents. But that sort of reductivism (if the label is apt) is simply a consequence of three things that are unavoidable for stoicism today. One is the development of the empirical method, which of course began to affect stoicism even in antiquity, and to turn it away from flippant speculation about physical processes. (For Galen's scathing and hilarious critique of a priori arguments by Zeno, Chrysippus, and Diogenes of Babylon to the effect that the heart, rather than the brain, was the source of speech, and thus discourse, and thus the mind, see Galen, *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*, 2.5) A second thing is the collapse of the notion that the cosmos, or nature as a whole, can most plausibly be understood as a rational being. And the third is what philosophers generally have learned from the exacting meta-ethical investigations pursued in the twentieth century and beyond.

Stoic naturalism. See Long and Sedley (1987, 1:§§26–30 and 43–55) for texts and commentary on the details of Stoic naturalism broadly. More recent commentary and copious bibliography may be found in Inwood (2003), especially the chapters on “Stoic Natural Philosophy (Physics and Cosmology)” by Michael J. White, “Stoic Theology” by Keimpe Algra, “Stoic Determinism” by Dorothea Frede, “Stoic Metaphysics” by Jacques Brunschwig, and “Stoic Naturalism and Its Critics” by T. H. Irwin. Some important similarities and differences between the Stoics and Spinoza are discussed there in Algra's essay on Stoic theology, and in Long's essay (on “Stoicism in the Philosophical Tradition”) later in the same volume. Naturalism and Stoic ethics are discussed directly in Striker (1991) and Schofield (2003). Norms implicit in nature are addressed in an important collection by Schofield and Striker (1986).

Stoic theology. Topics concerning the role of the cosmological and theological content in Stoicism, particularly in Stoic ethics, are discussed in various articles in Salles (2009). See especially (Algra 2009; Boeri 2009; and Inwood 2009). An exhaustive treatment of Stoic proofs for the existence of a cosmic God, along with the existence of traditional gods, is in Meijer (2007).

Natural moral development in the Stoic tradition. Annas argues that for the Greeks generally, the notion of nature—in particular human nature—that figured most strongly in ethical theory was not one of “neutral, ‘brute’ fact; it [was] strongly normative” (1993, 137). It concerned

the goal or end of human development; the natural life [was] the life led by humans who have developed in a natural way, this being understood as a way in which the potentialities which for us are given develop without interference from other, external factors. It is obvious that this . . . use of nature presupposes two things. One is that we can in fact distinguish between the thing’s or person’s nature and outside influences that count as interferences with that nature. . . . The second assumption is that we can distinguish between what forms an expression of a person’s nature and what forms a corruption of it—between a natural and an *unnatural* development. (136)

See also on this point Long (1970–71, 88) and Gill (1989). This sort of claim is implicitly unpacked here (some might say unraveled) in the section on motivated norms, and in the account in chapter 6 of how a preference for health over ill health, fitness over mere health, and virtuosity over fitness leads to virtue and eudaimonia.

The sequence of moral development. It is not easy to extract the Stoics’ account of the sequence of moral development from the ancient texts. Cicero, *De Finibus*, 3.v–vi, and *De Officiis*, 1.vi (in the Loeb Library texts rather than freer translations), make a good start. The latter is especially good on the topic of complexity of infant motivation. Inwood (2005, chap. 10) has a striking comparison of Cicero and Seneca on relevant points, focusing mainly on Seneca. Rosalind Hursthouse (2012) has an equally striking comparison of Aristotle and Chrysippus on some aspects of the Stoic account of moral development. For reading one’s way into the rest of the relevant materials, see Long and Sedley (1987, §§43–55); Schofield (2003); and Brennan (2003). On the role of the cradle argument, see Jacques Brunschwig (1986).

Oikeiōsis and the cradle argument. Brunschwig, in “The Cradle Argument in Epicureanism and Stoicism,” reminds us that cradle arguments, with varying premises, were common currency in Hellenistic ethics. He is rather dubious of the worth of the arguments as he pieces them together, but his comments on Hierocles (138–40)—particularly on the way Hierocles complicates his version of the cradle argument by introducing a premise about the developmental effects of the child’s powers of representation—are intriguing.

In any case, the linchpin of the Stoic account of moral development is the psychological process through which the newborn’s self-interest becomes the infant’s interest in and affection for things that serve self-interest and other primal impulses, which thence becomes the child’s interest in and affection for such things independent of whether they serve those impulses, which in turn becomes an

affection for acting appropriately, and so forth. See White (1979); Striker (1983); and Engberg-Pedersen (1990) on this point as it relates to the ancient texts. In each developmental step toward the sage's eventual attachment to virtue, the causal process is the same. *Oikeiōsis* has been translated as endearment, making a thing belong to the agent, familiarization, attachment, incorporation, or appropriation. (*Oikeion* is opposed to *allogtrion*, what is alien. *Oikeiōsis* descends etymologically from the word for house, in an extended sense of household that includes virtually anything and anyone closely related to the house. See Pembroke [1971] for an account of the history of the term, the distinctive stoic use of it, and the thought that "if there had been no *oikeiosis*, there would have been no Stoa.") Striker, in "The Role of Oikeiosis in Stoic Ethics" (145), says, "The Greek term is usually not translated, but transliterated; not because it is untranslatable, but because any translation would seem to be intolerably clumsy. What it means can perhaps be rendered as 'recognition and appreciation of something as belonging to one'; the corresponding verb . . . as 'coming to be (or being made to be) well-disposed toward something.'" We often use the metaphor of attachment in our text because it seems a good fit with contemporary psychological theory. But Long and Sedley, in *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (351), make a strong case that "appropriation" better suits the ancient texts:

"Alienation" and "appropriation" are literal translations of the Greek terms *allogtriosis* and *oikeiosis*. Their English associations with property ownership capture the main force of the Stoic concepts here, though any translation will miss something of the original. The advantage of "appropriation" is its providing a means, through the verb or adjective "appropriate," of rendering grammatically related forms of the Greek root *oik-*. This connotes ownership, what belongs to something, but in Stoic usage that notion is also conceived as an affective disposition relative to the thing which is owned or belongs. Hence the English associations of "appropriation" with forcible possession are to be discounted in our translations. Correspondingly, the notion of claiming or desiring ownership needs to be read in our translation of the adjective *oikeion* by "appropriate." So [for example] the "first thing appropriate to every animal," means the first thing "fitting" or "suitable," but the relevant suitability is like that of a house to its owner, a recognition of ownership, or like that of a kinsman to a blood relation, a recognition of affinity coupled with affection.

This is sobering and suggests that our use of attachment in this context might be too weak.

Cicero's account of stoic moral development theory. Perhaps the best source in the ancient texts for a summary of this developmental story is in Cicero, *De Finibus*, book 3. The story was told and retold in many texts. Long, in "The Logical Basis of Stoic Ethics," reconstructs and analyzes the logic of the version in Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, 7.85–88, in detail. And as one might guess, a variety of texts on this point are excerpted and compared helpfully in Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, section 58ff. But that otherwise admirable book presents stoic ethics in conformity with an ancient Stoic "division" of ethics that (in our view) obscures and dilutes the continuity and power of the developmental story.

Even a straight run through Cicero's exposition, however, shows that a good deal of work needs to be done to dig out the structure of the argument. Engberg-Pederson, in "Discovering the Good: Oikeiosis and Kathekonta in Stoic Ethics," has done this thoroughly and lucidly, though we think his disputes with Striker ("The Role of Oikeiosis in Stoic Ethics") and Long ("The Logical Basis of Stoic Ethics") are unhelpful. Engberg-Pedersen, in "Stoic Philosophy and the Concept of Person," also has a useful discussion of the conception of subjectivity, objectivity, and the concept of the person implicit in this developmental story. We are less at ease with his book-length study (*The Stoic Theory of Oikeiosis*) in several respects, though we certainly agree with the general line in chapter 4 of his book that there is no great trick to getting a moral argument (in addition to a description of development) out of *oikeiōsis* and the cradle argument. Moreover, the two accounts agree that the key to doing this lies in noticing the way agents reflect on and generalize beliefs about themselves. His reconstruction is limited by the terms of his project, which is primarily historical but is refreshing and illuminating on many points. The endorsement here of the central point about the reflexive, iterative processes of rationality comes from cognitive psychology, however (e.g., the work of Piaget; see Flavell [1985]), and not from an analysis of the ancient texts.

It is worth quoting Cicero's text at some length, so it can be conveniently compared to the version of the cradle argument offered here in chapters 5 and 6. The quotation is from Cicero, *De Finibus*, 3.v–vi, in the Loeb translation by H. Rackham. Cato is speaking to Cicero on behalf of stoicism.

V. [Cato] began: "It is the view of those whose system I adopt, that immediately upon birth (for that is the proper point to start from) a living creature feels an attachment for itself, and an impulse to preserve itself and to feel affection for its own constitution and for those things which tend to preserve that constitution; while on the other hand it conceives an antipathy to destruction and to those things which appear to threaten destruction. In proof of this opinion [stoics] urge that infants desire things conducive to their health and reject things that are the opposite before they have ever felt pleasure or pain; this would not be the case, unless they felt an affection for their own constitution and were afraid of destruction. But it would be impossible that they should feel desire at all unless they possessed self-consciousness, and consequently felt affection for themselves. This leads to the conclusion that it is love of self which supplies the primary impulse to action. Pleasure on the contrary, according to most Stoics, is not to be reckoned among the primary objects of natural impulse; and I very strongly agree with them, for fear lest many immoral consequences would follow if we held that nature has placed pleasure among the earliest objects of desire. But the fact of our affection for the objects first adopted at nature's prompting seems to require no further proof than this, that there is no one who, given the choice, would not prefer to have all the parts of his body sound and whole, rather than maimed or distorted although equally serviceable.

"Again, acts of cognition (which we may term comprehensions or perceptions, or, if these words are distasteful or obscure, *katalepsis*),—these we consider meet to be adopted for their own sake, because they possess an element

that so to speak embraces and contains the truth. This can be seen in the case of children, whom we may observe to take pleasure in finding something out for themselves by the use of reason, even though they gain nothing by it. The sciences also, we consider, are things to be chosen for their own sake, partly because there is in them something worthy of choice, partly because they consist of acts of cognition and contain an element of fact established by methodical reasoning. The mental assent to what is false, as the Stoics believe, is more repugnant to us than all the other things that are contrary to nature.

“(Again, of the members or parts of the body, some appear to have been bestowed on us by nature for the sake of their use, for example the hands, legs, feet, and the internal organs, as to the degree of whose utility even physicians are not agreed; while others serve no useful purpose, but appear to be intended for ornament: for instance the peacock’s tail, the plumage of the dove with its shifting colours, and the breasts and beard of the male human being.) All this is perhaps somewhat baldly expressed; for it deals with what may be called the primary elements of nature, to which any embellishment of style can scarcely be applied, nor am I for my part concerned to attempt it. On the other hand, when one is treating of more majestic topics the style instinctively rises with the subject, and the brilliance of the language increases with the dignity of the theme.” “True,” [Cicero] rejoined; “but to my mind, any clear statement of an important topic possesses excellence of style. It would be childish to desire an ornate style in subjects of the kind with which you are dealing. A man of sense and education will be content to be able to express his meaning plainly and clearly.”

VI. “To proceed then,” [Cato] continued, “for we have been digressing from the primary impulses of nature; and with these the later stages must be in harmony. The next step is the following fundamental classification: That which is in itself in accordance with nature, or which produces something else that is so, and which therefore is deserving of choice as possessing a certain amount of positive value—*axia* as the Stoics call it—this they pronounce to be ‘valuable’ (for so I suppose we may translate it); and on the other hand that which is the contrary of the former they term ‘valueless.’ The initial principle being thus established that things in accordance with nature are ‘things to be taken’ for their own sake, and their opposites similarly things to be ‘rejected,’ the first ‘appropriate act’ (for so I render the Greek *kathekon*) is to preserve oneself in one’s natural constitution; the next is to retain those things which are in accordance with nature and to repel those that are the contrary; then when this principle of choice and also of rejection has been discovered, there follows next in order choice conditioned by ‘appropriate action’; then, such choice becomes a fixed habit; and finally, choice fully rationalized and in harmony with nature. It is at this final stage that the Good properly so called first emerges and comes to be understood in its true nature. Man’s first attraction is towards the things in accordance with nature; but as soon as he has understanding, or rather has become capable of ‘conception’—in Stoic phraseology *ennoia*—and has discerned the order and so to speak harmony that governs conduct, he thereupon esteems this harmony far more highly than all the things for which he originally felt an affection, and by exercise of intelligence and reason infers

the conclusion that herein resides the Chief Good of man, the thing that is praiseworthy and desirable for its own sake; and that inasmuch as this consists in what the Stoics term *homologia* and we with your approval may call ‘conformity’—inasmuch I say as in this resides that Good which is the End to which all else is a means, moral conduct and Moral Worth itself which alone is counted as a good, although of subsequent development, is nevertheless the sole thing that is for its own efficacy and value desirable, whereas none of the primary objects of nature is desirable for its own sake. But since those actions which I have termed ‘appropriate acts’ are based on the primary natural objects, it follows that the former are means to the latter. Hence it may correctly be said that all ‘appropriate acts’ are means to the end of attaining the primary needs of nature. Yet it must not be inferred that their attainment is the ultimate Good, inasmuch as moral action is not one of the primary natural attractions, but is an outgrowth of these, a later development, as I have said. At the same time moral action is in accordance with nature, and stimulates our desire far more strongly than all the objects that attracted us earlier. But at this point a caution is necessary at the outset. It will be an error to infer that this view implies two Ultimate Goods. For though if a man were to make it his purpose to take a true aim with a spear or arrow at some mark, his ultimate end, corresponding to the ultimate good as we pronounce it, would be to do all he could to aim straight: the man in this illustration would have to do everything to aim straight, and yet, although he did everything to attain his purpose, his ‘ultimate End,’ so to speak, could be what corresponded to what we call the Chief Good in the conduct of life, whereas the actual hitting of the mark would be in our phrase ‘to be chosen’ but not ‘to be desired.’”

The obscurities in this outline have made heavy weather for scholars on several points—for example, on the issue of how self-interest can generate genuine altruism, whether the ultimate good is virtue as opposed to happiness, whether cosmic telos plays a logically necessary role in the argument, or whether Cicero is giving an argument in ethical theory at all, as opposed to a description of psychological development. On the last point see Striker, “The Role of *Oikeiosis* in Stoic Ethics,” versus Engberg-Pedersen, “Discovering the Good: *Oikeiosis* and *Kathekonta* in Stoic Ethics,” and then Striker, “Following Nature: A Study in Stoic Ethics” (esp. 6–13), and Engberg-Pedersen, *The Stoic Theory of Oikeiosis*.

Hierocles and social oikeiōsis. Contemporary discussion of *oikeiōsis* as used in Stoic ethics has reflected some interesting differences. (See Pembroke 1971; Inwood 1983; Striker 1983; Engberg-Pedersen 1986, 1990.)

From the ancient sources, Hierocles is typically cited on social *oikeiōsis* and its connection to Stoic cosmopolitanism—often just by quoting a fragment from his treatise titled “How Should One Behave toward One’s Relatives?” (Hierocles 2009, 90–91). Gill (2009) puts this in a broader context, including the interactions of children and adults. The Hierocles fragment is about the concentric circles of our moral concerns, which begin at the center with one that encloses only one’s body and the things employed for its sake and move outward in steps from immediate family, then successively to distant family, tribe, fellow citizens, and eventually to all human beings. He suggests that once these are properly thought

through, “it is possible, starting with the most stretched-out one, to draw the circles—concerning the behavior that is due to each group—together in a way, as though toward the center, and with an effort to keep transferring items out of the containing circles into the contained.” But Hierocles is also definite there and in his “Elements of Ethics” that we all begin with egoistic concerns. Note that these references are to a recent English translation of all the existing fragments from Hierocles, together with an elaborate commentary on them.

Some people draw the inference, from what remains of Hierocles’s *Ethics*, that he used the cradle argument to argue that the sage ultimately comes to regard the welfare of others as “belonging” to her just as surely as her own does. The reconstructed text includes this famous passage, here translated by Annas, in *The Morality of Happiness* (267–68):

In general each of us is as it were circumscribed by many circles, some smaller, others larger, some enclosing and others enclosed, depending on their differing and unequal relations to one another. The first and nearest circle is the one which a person has drawn around his own mind as a centre; in this circle is included the body and things got for the body’s sake. This circle is the smallest and all but touches its centre. Second, further from the centre and enclosing the first one, is the one in which are placed parents, siblings, wife, and children. Third is the one in which are uncles and aunts, grandfathers and grandmothers, siblings’ children and also cousins. Next the circle including other relatives. And next the one including fellow-demesmen; then the one of fellow-tribesmen; then the one of fellow-citizens and then in the same way the circle of people from towns nearby and the circle of people of the same ethnic group. The furthest and largest, which includes all the circles, is that of the whole human race.

When this has been considered, it is for the person striving for the proper use of each thing to draw the circles somehow towards the centre and to make efforts to move people from the including circles into the included ones. It is for someone with familial love to [treat] parents and siblings, [wife and children, like oneself; grandfathers, grandmothers, uncles and aunts like parents, siblings’ children like one’s own, cousins like siblings] and so by the same analogy treat older relatives, male and female, like grandfathers or uncles and aunts; those of one’s own age like cousins, and the younger ones like cousins’ children.

I have thus briefly given clear instructions as to how to behave to one’s relatives, once we have learnt how to treat oneself, parents and siblings, and also wife and children. But there remains the point that we should treat people from the third circle similarly to those in the second, and our [further] relatives similarly to those from the third circle. For the distance in blood, which is rather great, removes some of one’s goodwill, but nonetheless we must make efforts towards equating them. We would hit a reasonable mark, if through our own initiative, we reduce the distance of this relationship to each person. The basic practical point has been stated; but we should add more, in the ways we address people, calling cousins siblings and uncles and aunts fathers and mothers, and among our further relatives calling some uncles, others nephews

and others cousins, extending the use of the name to fit the age they happen to be. For this mode of address would be no mean sign of the efforts we make in each case, and at the same time would stimulate and intensify the drawing-in of the circles we have suggested.

However, now we have got so far, it occurs to me to remember something which is not irrelevant to the division of parents that has been given. We said about that, when we were at the place where we were comparing a mother with a father, that we should allot more affection to one's mother and more respect to one's father. Consistently with this we should now establish that it is fitting to give relatives on one's mother's side greater affection, and those on the father's side greater respect.

On the face of it, this is very thin evidence of Hierocles's giving a developmental account of "social" *oikeiōsis* from a basis in self-love alone, and F. H. Sandbach, in *The Stoics* (34), says of it that "it has been objected that it is superfluous to suppose a progress through these circles to a final recognition of affinity for all men, since there are many passages [in stoic texts] which indicate a belief that man has a natural tendency to love and assist his fellows, from which his *oikeiōsis* to them can be immediately derived."

Annas (*The Morality of Happiness*, 283) affirms that grounding social *oikeiōsis* in a natural affection for others is the standard stoic account of the matter. And her account of the debate between Aristotelians and Stoics about whether morality has a single primal source (self-love) or twin sources is instructive (288–90).

Stoic moral requirements. Cicero (*De Officiis*, 1.iv) elaborates the Stoic account of the sources of moral duty in terms of six or seven elements of primal agency:

IV. First of all, Nature has endowed every species of living creature with the instinct of self-preservation, of avoiding what seems likely to cause injury to life or limb, and of procuring and providing everything needful for life—food, shelter, and the like. A common property of all creatures is also the reproductive instinct (the purpose of which is the propagation of the species) and also a certain amount of concern for their offspring. But the most marked difference between man and beast is this: the beast, just as far as it is moved by the senses and with very little perception of past or future, adapts itself to that alone which is present at the moment; while man—because he is endowed with reason, by which he comprehends the chain of consequences, perceives the causes of things, understands the relation of cause to effect and of effect to cause, draws analogies, and connects and associates the present and the future—easily surveys the course of his whole life and makes the necessary preparations for its conduct.

Nature likewise by the power of reason associates man with man in the common bonds of speech and life; she implants in him above all, I may say, a consistency . . . [a carefulness] to do nothing in an improper or unmanly fashion, and in every thought and deed to do or think nothing capriciously.

It is from these elements that is forged and fashioned that moral goodness which is the subject of this inquiry—something that, even though it be not

generally ennobled, is still worthy of all honour; and by its own nature, we correctly maintain, it merits praise, even though it be praised by none.

Cicero does not say this directly, but we assume it is plausible to think that these are all operative elements in the developmental story in which *oikeiōsis* is the linchpin.

This book on a new form of stoicism also follows the cradle argument, together with the factors Cicero assembles in the passage quoted above, all the way from primal affection for self and others out to social justice for “the remotest Mysian.” It does not propose that what develops is ultimately a universalistic sort of fellow feeling, love, or Kantian awe about the dignity and infinite worth of rational agency—though that happens in some cases. Rather, we argue that in *all* cases in the normal development of healthy agency, the process of *oikeiōsis* works through successive approximations to produce an eventual appropriation of consistent, principled action. Whether those principles must all be of a completely impartialist sort—for example, universal impartial beneficence—or whether some or all of them may properly remain a sort of radiating beneficence (hot near the core of the dear self and cooling as it moves farther from the core) remains a disputed point. It may also be possible to sever the point almost entirely from stoicism by focusing on the development of healthy agency (Becker 2012).

Psychology. The psychology used here is the textbook variety. That is, the psychology is the sort that represents settled findings in the field, and whose careful description has passed the critical scrutiny of many professionals who are using it to report results to their students (and not, for example, merely to serve as a provocation). This is in keeping with the stoic project. Ethics should be sensitive to changes in science but understandably declines to be blown about by hot ideas that have not yet been thoroughly tested and integrated into existing knowledge. The psychological material employed in this chapter and the next can be gleaned from several standard (and massive) texts in developmental psychology. A useful way to approach this is to look at successive editions of well-regarded and widely used texts. For example, Roger Brown, *Social Psychology* (1985), went through many printings, and then there was a major revision in 1986. The comparison is instructive. Owen Flanagan, *Varieties of Moral Personality* (1991), is also an extraordinarily useful resource. More of this literature will be cited in the commentary to chapter 6, where the cradle argument is developed in more detail. For some of this, see Philip David Zelazo’s massive two-volume *Oxford Handbook of Developmental Psychology* (2013).

Internalism. The terms externalism and internalism, as applied to moral theories, have been used in a variety of ways. For especially clear guidance through the ensuing confusion, see John Robertson and Michael Stocker, “Externalism and Internalism,” and for an important criticism of conventional wisdom on the subject, see Christine M. Korsgaard, “Skepticism about Practical Reason.” The issue arises here because chapter 5 insists that motivated norms are to be found *only* within the psychological structures of the actual endeavors of individual agents. In that sense chapter 5 adopts a thoroughgoing form of internalism. Norms do not exist in some realm “external” to the particular psychology of a particular agent, such that the agent’s moral task is to work up the motivation

to conform to an external standard or rule. Rather, the agent's moral task is to "get it right, all things considered"—to act appropriately, meaning to act so as to optimize the achievement of all her goals, given her resources and situation.

This naturally raises the following objection of an externalist sort. "Don't we want to say that the norms that come from an agent's murderous projects are just *wrong*? And that what makes them wrong is that they are morally unjustifiable—regardless of whether or not they accurately reflect the agent's internal, all-things-considered norms? And regardless of whether the agent has some project that motivates her to conform to them?"

The answer to these questions is no. Or rather, there are two answers. One is no. The other must wait until the account in chapter 6 shows that nascent virtues develop naturally in healthy human agents, and stoic moral training makes them superordinate to vices. Such training irons out conflicts and always points rational agency toward the good. Stoic moral training does not produce pathology.

But this is chapter 5. Let us go back to the simple no. Every norm (as a fact about the world) is internal to *some* agent's project. We simply cannot *find* any norms—as opposed to sentences about them in writing or speech—that are external to agents in this sense. Even in antiquity, when Stoics thought they had found norms in the cosmos itself, this was because they believed the cosmos was a rational being (god). They thought its norms were in fact the norms of individual human agents also because they thought such agents were parts of the cosmic being, infused with its rationality. So even then Stoics were internalists in the sense described. (For a dissenting view on whether to call this an appeal to "external" reasons, see John M. Cooper, "Eudaimonism, the Appeal to Nature, and 'Moral Duty' in Stoicism.") Even in that now abandoned theology, there were no norms external to all particular agents. Of course any agent can have norms (from her projects) about how others ought to behave. And god can have norms for us all. Those norms are external to the targeted agent, certainly, but they are facts about the lives of other agents. It remains to be determined whether it is appropriate for the targeted agent, in terms of her own endeavors, to conform. (As the title of the Werner Herzog film on Kaspar Hauser has it, every man for himself and God against all.)

On the other hand, we certainly think that an agent can be mistaken in various ways about the norms internal to his endeavors. There is always a truth of the matter with respect to what conduct is appropriate for him—a truth that he may often miss. More to the point, we hold that when healthy agents come to be attached to (or to appropriate) the endeavor of "getting it right," then they will by that fact be motivated to do *x* simply by coming to believe that *x* is the appropriate thing to do. And their motive will be to do the right thing just because it is right. This sounds to some ears similar to the sort of internalism ascribed to Kant. For reasons to be skeptical of intimations of Kant, see the commentary to chapter 6.

Tying norms to endeavors of particular agents is hardly a novel approach. For a discussion of some of its advocates, and its difficulties, see James Griffin, *Well-Being* (chap. 8, sec. 3). Bernard Williams, in particular, has argued forcefully for this sort of internalism in "Internal and External Reasons" in his *Moral Luck* (101–13). What these "personal aims" accounts typically lack, in our view, is

exactly what the stoic developmental story provides—an account of how healthy agents come to be motivated by moral norms just because they are moral norms.

Autonomy, determinism, and fate. A. A. Long, in “Freedom and Determinism in the Stoic Theory of Human Action,” ably defends the ancient Stoics on these topics against charges of incoherence. Sophie Botros, in “Freedom, Causality, Fatalism and Early Stoic Philosophy,” places the discussion of the ancient doctrines in the context of contemporary discussions of Humean and necessitarian causation, compatibilism and incompatibilism, and free will. Though she holds that ancient stoics had a “defective” view of freedom, she nonetheless argues vigorously that they had original and defensible positions on these issues that are not adequately captured by assimilating them to contemporary doctrines such as soft (compatibilist) determinism. Here is part of her summation, footnotes omitted:

We can now perhaps attempt a first shot at stating the differences, as so far revealed, between the early Stoic and the modern soft determinist accounts of freedom and responsibility, and suggest why these accounts are so easily and frequently confused. The *Stoic* account comprises two inter-connected parts. Human action, or what is (in our power), is distinguished from mere happening in terms of its special causal structure, of which assent and impulse (the nearest equivalents of the soft determinists’ “choice” and “desire”) are the most important constituent elements.

The charge that Stoic fatalism rules out human influence upon events is then answered by asserting the causal indispensability of action to certain kinds of outcome. But, it would seem, the only power granted to us by Chrysippus . . . is the power to do what we *must* do in order that destiny be accomplished. It is perhaps hardly surprising then that the Stoic position has puzzled commentators, and has even led to charges of disingenuousness; for, disregarding the teleological, and possibly also the necessitarian, overtones, it is precisely this way of representing the human situation in a determined world that *hard* determinists exploit in order to show how *implausible* it is to regard the individual as free in such a world.

Now the modern soft determinist, like the Stoics, asserts that actions caused by our choices or desires are in our power. But, unlike them, he is not here elucidating the causal structure of action in general (i.e. as opposed to mere happening), but is distinguishing actions which are, from those which are *not* within our power. Moreover, in construing this distinction in terms of whether or not we are *compelled* to act as we do (or, with omissions, whether or not we are prevented from doing what we fail to do) he attempts to represent the power thus accorded (or denied) us as entailing, even within a deterministic framework, that we could do *otherwise* than we do or, in other words, that we are presented in some sense with alternative possibilities of action.

Thus it is that, under one ambiguous and misleading formulation, the soft determinist account of freedom may seem to resemble that of the early Stoics. But to substantiate the claim that these ancient thinkers *were* soft determinists, in anything like the traditional sense, it would be necessary to show, not just that the Stoics *happened* to propound a theory of possibility, as well as of freedom, but that they *used* this account of possibility (whether explicitly,

like Moore and Ayer, or implicitly, like Schlick, i.e. merely through the ideas of compulsion and constraint) to show how men may still be regarded as free in a determined world. No modern commentator has yet demonstrated that such a connection exists between the Stoic theories of freedom and possibility. (288–89)

Long, in “Freedom and Determinism in the Stoic Theory of Human Action” (175), makes a useful observation when he says, “What matters to the Stoic sage is his disposition, how he is inside. He is free because he feels free, because he makes up his own mind about moral action in accordance with the values prescribed by *orthos logos*.” Brad Inwood, in *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism* (95), notes helpfully that “[The Stoics] wanted to be able to say that an agent is responsible because he realized and accepted what he was doing.” Harry G. Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,” on second-order desires, is obviously relevant to what we say about iterative causal processes and awareness.

On fatalism, we must take note of the so-called Master Argument, famous in antiquity and attributed to Diodorus Cronus. Epictetus gives this exposition in *The Discourses* (2.xix.1), in the translation by William and Martha Kneale (*The Development of Logic*, 119):

The Master Argument seems to have been formulated with some such starting points as these. There is an incompatibility between the three following propositions, “Everything that is past and true is necessary,” “The impossible does not follow from the possible,” “What neither is nor will be is possible.” Seeing this incompatibility, Diodorus used the convincingness of the first two propositions to establish the thesis that nothing is possible which neither is nor will be true.

The Kneales say of this: “It is difficult to understand either why the first statement should have been found generally acceptable or why the first two should have been held to entail the denial of the third.” Their criticism of it (119–28) summarizes the standard objections to it, both ancient and modern.

Additional textual material and commentary are in sections 38 and 55–62 of Long and Sedley’s *The Hellenistic Philosophers*. This is their translation of an apt passage about the equally famous Lazy Argument, advanced by critics to embarrass the Stoics (339–40):

Cicero, *On Fate* (28–30)

(1) Nor will we be blocked by the so called “Lazy Argument” (the *argos logos*, as the philosophers entitle it). If we gave in to it, we would do nothing whatever in life. They pose it as follows: “If it is your fate to recover from this illness, you will recover, regardless of whether or not you call the doctor. Likewise, if it is your fate not to recover from this illness, you will not recover, regardless of whether or not you call the doctor. And one or the other is your fate. Therefore it is pointless to call the doctor.” . . . (2) This argument is criticized by Chrysippus. Some events in the world are simple, he says, others are complex. “Socrates will die on such and such a day” is simple: his day of dying is fixed, regardless of what he may do or not do. But if a fate is of the

form “Oedipus will be born to Laius,” it will not be possible to add “regardless of whether or not Laius has intercourse with a woman.” For the event is complex and “co-fated.” He uses this term because what is fated is both that Laius will have intercourse with his wife and that by her he will beget Oedipus. Likewise, suppose it has been said “Milo will wrestle at the Olympic Games.” If someone replied “Will he then wrestle regardless of whether or not he has an opponent?” he would be mistaken. For “He will wrestle” is complex, because there is no wrestling without an opponent. (3) All fallacies of this kind, then, are refuted in the same way. “You will recover, regardless of whether or not you call the doctor” is fallacious. For it is just as much fated for you to call the doctor as for you to recover. His term for these cases is, as I said, “co-fated.”

We now reject Chrysippus’s example of a “simple” event—without prejudice to the issue of whether there might be a better one (perhaps the moment nothing became something, or the moment that the initial something exploded in a big bang). But we are happy to develop the remainder. For a book-length discussion of freedom and determinism in Stoicism, see Suzanne Bobzien (1998).

Richard Taylor has formulated what may be seen as a successor of the Master Argument, in *Metaphysics* (chap. 6). His version makes the connection to fatalism clear, but it also makes clear how far such an argument strays from our views in this section. For a trenchant and witty critique of this and related versions of fatalism, see James Cargile (1996).

Acknowledgments

An early draft of this chapter was presented to a graduate seminar on Stoic and Cartesian Ethics, run jointly by Daniel Devereux and John Marshall of the University of Virginia in the fall of 1995. The whole book was improved as a result, but this chapter in particular was subject to acute criticism by John Marshall (on heteronomous norms), James Cargile (on futility, and on fatalism), and Daniel Devereux (on the ancient texts). John Cooper read his paper “Posidonious on Emotions” at the University of Virginia that term, and it illuminated much about the moral psychology employed by ancient Stoics. I am also grateful to Paulette Parker for her able assistance in the UVa libraries. A later draft of the chapter benefited from comments by Stephen Darwall (on motivated norms).

For many years my thinking about moral argument has benefited from a course of lectures given by Philippa Foot at Oxford in 1971–72—lectures distilled in a justly famous article (Foot, “Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives”). Among other things, that article makes etiquette into a theoretically illuminating example. My reply in “The Finality of Moral Judgments” is developed in more detail in *Reciprocity* (chap. 1). I have profited in a similar way from John Searle, “How to Derive Ought from Is,” and the work by G.E.M. Anscombe, “On Brute Fact,” on which it builds.

This second edition has profited immeasurably, throughout, from Brad Inwood’s (1998) review of the first edition. Among other things, his review raised the thorny question of the “two goods” criticism of ancient Stoicism and the need for a better resolution of it than then given in the book. That better resolution is

now given at length in chapter 6 but has prompted small changes throughout the book, and particularly in chapters 5–7. Both Inwood and William O. Stephens (2000), in concert with recent correspondence and conversations with Massimo Pigliucci, have caused me to reassess the usefulness of Epictetus for my project, and the importance of stoic moral training in the discussion of moral development generally. Those changes are visible in both this chapter and the next.

Virtue

IN ANTIQUITY, Stoics were notorious for their hard doctrines about virtue: that it was one thing, not many; that it alone was good, all other things being merely rank-ordered relative to each other (as “preferred” or not) for the sake of the good; that virtue was sufficient for happiness even on the rack; and that it did not admit of degrees. Such slogans are treasures for publicists and caricaturists, and distractions for philosophers. Nonetheless, in a cool intellectual climate we can harmlessly connect them to the account of virtue we now offer.

Inseparable Agency, Virtue, and Eudaimonia

There is a single developmental account for three fundamental features of stoic ethics: *agency*, culminating in the sort of human-scale “commanding faculty” (*hêgemonikon*) possessed only by stoic sages; *virtue*, the coherent combination of the separate virtues, vices, and other elements of human physiology and psychology that is the sort of virtue-in-the-singular possessed only by stoic sages; and *eudaimonia* (happiness), the sort of equanimity and other states of being and consciousness possessed only by stoic sages.

These three things are distinct conceptually, but in this version of stoicism they are so closely linked together causally that for practical purposes they are inseparable. The stoic version of ideal agency is both necessary and sufficient for the stoic version of virtue-in-the-singular, which in turn is necessary and sufficient for stoic eudaimonia. To have any one of these things is to have them all. If one of them is missing, so are the other two. Though the discussion of stoic eudaimonia is mostly reserved for chapter 7, the developmental story in this chapter will make clear the inseparability of the three in stoicism. And that by itself will address some of the difficulties the ancient Stoics had with their critics.

Stoics claim to be working in the eudaimonistic tradition. In that tradition, eudaimonia is usually understood to be the final end—the one thing for the sake of which everything else is done. That implies that eudaimonia is a good, and arguably the most important one. Yet Stoics claim that virtue is the only good. They go on to say that virtue is sufficient for eudaimonia, but that is still unsatisfactory, because it still

implies that there is an end, or goal beyond virtue that is also good. Under pressure, some ancient Stoics resorted to saying that virtue and eudaimonia were identical.

Notice that not all versions of ethics in the eudaimonistic tradition have this particular problem of consistency. Moreover, although it is plausible to assume that the development of human agency is roughly the same in all these versions of virtue ethics, there is also a point at which they diverge in pursuit of significantly different kinds of ideal agency, virtue-in-the-singular, and eudaimonia. At that point significantly different forms of moral education would begin. At that point, stoics would begin to speak of a person as *prokopton* (one who is making progress toward specifically stoic virtue).

In the developmental account to follow, we resist the attempt to declare an outright winner in this ancient contest. Instead, we describe a specifically stoic form of virtue as the only good, together with the immediate clarification about preferred and dispreferred indifferents. We make the argument that such virtue is achieved only through a natural course of moral development ending in a specifically stoic form of ideal agency, and we reiterate the claim that the virtue it produces is sufficient for eudaimonia. We emphasize the practical inseparability of the stoic versions of ideal agency, virtue, and eudaimonia. For practical purposes, all of them together are the “final” end, because only when all three of these fundamental features are at the highest possible levels do we have any of them. And if any one of them starts to waver or weaken, strengthening it suddenly becomes the temporary “final” end, until the whole complex is working again.

In this new version of stoicism, then, ideal agency is the terminus of a highly motivated form of natural psychological development. Not every goal within such agency is good; ideal agents are not “pure.” But ideal agency is relentlessly aimed at the only thing that is ultimately good, namely, achieving and sustaining stoic virtue-in-the-singular, from which—and only from which—a stoically appropriate form of eudaimonia will emerge.

We think this description is consistent with ancient Stoic doctrines and texts. It preserves the thing the ancient Stoics were most insistent about—namely, that virtue is the only good. It preserves the ancient insistence that virtue is an active form of rational agency. And it preserves the ancient insistence that virtue is sufficient for happiness.

What stoicism has to do in order to make the case for stoic eudaimonia is to show that it, and only it, puts a stop to the request for something better. What kind of thing could that be? Most of the answer will be described in chapter 7 and its commentary. But this much can be said in advance: stoic eudaimonia is a state of being and consciousness that is *consistent* with the active, effective activity of ideal agency and in general

is characterized by the calm (equanimity; tranquility) that comes from the absence of further moral struggle and the absence of retrospective regret or prospective alarm about things outside one's control, together with the confidence that comes from the effortless persistence of moral purpose. Beyond that basic calm and confidence, stoic eudaimonia is variable along multiple dimensions. Specifically, it is variable with respect to what is required or permitted for human agents given their personal circumstances in the physical and social environments in which they are situated. This variability is a consequence of the variability in what is required of virtue and ideal agency.

To be more specific in a way that anticipates chapter 7 and its commentary, and which begins to explain the way in which "happiness" obscures the complexity of eudaimonia, consider: the dimensions of variance in stoic eudaimonia will necessarily include the amount of physical and psychological energy, tension, and concentrated attention required to act (which may vary from extremely tight to extremely relaxed, depending on the circumstances), the hedonic level of one's experience (which may vary from extremely pleasurable to extremely painful, depending on one's circumstances), and the nature of one's emotional life (which may vary from extremely intense to extremely diffuse, or extremely complex to extremely simple, or extremely narrow in focus to extremely wide in focus, again given the circumstances).

The remainder of this chapter describes the developmental process that brings virtue, agency, and eudaimonia together. The commentary at the end of this chapter makes additional comments on that matter, and the concluding chapter and commentary on happiness (think: stoic eudaimonia) completes the picture.

The Development of Virtue through Agency

As biological organisms we arc through the processes of generation, growth, development, reproduction, and degeneration. Each of these processes has its own distinct and final terminus (creation, increase, elaboration, replication, disintegration) toward which its subordinate processes work, and each functions alongside the others throughout our biological lives. These processes are not coordinated in the same way, or even very well, in every life. They are subject to lethal genetic mutations, gestational malformations, defective growth mechanisms, deficits in development, and disease. Nonetheless, we suppose it is plausible to say they are all in fact coordinated on mortality; they are coordinated on completing the life, not perfecting the organism to the point of immortality. The ultimate biological destination of every human life is its own death.

As agents, however, we are purposive. We have intentional goals, aims, ends, as well as a biological terminus. We ceaselessly organize and re-organize our biological lives into endeavors—into unconnected sets of them; into more or less coordinated sets of them running parallel to each other; perhaps into a coherent way of life; even into a life-plan or a deliberately constructed life. Agency is not oriented toward its own completion. Its end is not to finish but ceaselessly to optimize the number of endeavors that are successfully pursued, which is to say that agency is oriented toward the end of perfecting-in-use the power of agency itself. We hold that virtue (in the singular) is achieved in perfected agency and, like perfection generally, does not admit of degrees. To the extent that agentic activity makes progress toward achieving and sustaining virtue, we may call it virtuous. Virtuous activity thus is a matter of degree, to the extent that it approaches virtue itself as found in perfected agency.

The Structure of Agency: Received and Constructed Elements

The agency of a mature human being is an exceedingly complex set of powers (capacities, abilities, propensities), and the set varies greatly from person to person. People differ in their perceptual abilities, in the salience various kinds of information has for them, in the strength and frequency of their primal impulses, in the way they deliberate, and so forth. For theoretical purposes, whether scientific or ethical, we need to make this bewildering complexity perspicuous, so that we can survey its full range and construct explanations, predictions, or prescriptions of some general or even universal applicability. The standard way of doing this is to work with a schematic account of agency that we may plausibly suppose covers at least the full range of actual (as opposed to hypothetical or fictive) variations we have encountered, either directly or by description. That is, we want a schema such that every actual variation of agency we find in the world will be an instantiation of that schema.

In doing this for ethical theory, we should be wary of two pitfalls. One is the philosopher's impulse to seek tight conceptual connections—in this case to construct a schematic model of agency from which substantive normative propositions can be derived a priori. In the worst cases this leads to circularity: the schematic account of agency is subtly moralized—that is, constructed from features or varieties of agency that will yield (nothing-else-considered) pretheoretically defined moral principles. The other pitfall is simply the theorist's bias for simplicity, combined with the philosopher's remarkable tolerance for abstraction. In the worst cases this leads to triviality: the schematic account of agency is so abstract that it yields nothing of interest in concrete cases.

Stoics hold that modern moral philosophy has often fallen into one or both of these traps. Ethical theorists now know in great detail, for example, much of what can and cannot be done theoretically with a single formal feature of reasoned argument—universalizability. Some have tried to build the whole edifice, like a perfectly balanced inverted pyramid, on that point. Others have built equally elaborate theories on the single substantive idea of maximizing expected utility, under various definitions of utility. Still others are developing a body of theory about coordinated and cooperative rational choice, under a variety of motivational and cognitive assumptions. All this work is immensely valuable, and for the purposes of ethics we have learned as much from it as from modern science. We reject, however, the ruthlessly pruned accounts of agency employed in it. We speculate that the seemingly intractable disputes between Kantians, utilitarians, contractarians, intuitionists, and so forth are ultimately traceable to the differing and overly simple or even formal accounts of agency they employ.

CRADLE ARGUMENT

We offer here a terse, schematic description of agency in the form of what has been called a cradle argument—an account that treats agency as something that emerges in the normal course of psychological development, beginning with the behavior of infants in the cradle, and whose mature, healthy form is what we then parse to find the structure we want to perfect. We are not looking for pathological agentic structures to perfect. (Question: what is worse than a psychopath? Answer: a psychopath with really strong agentic powers.)

Schematic though it is, we believe our description is nonetheless fairly close to the ground in psychological theory. What we say below will necessarily repeat some things outlined earlier in chapters 3 and 5, but it will elaborate and reorganize those remarks. It should be noted that our intent is to give an account that is wholly unmoralized, except for the leading way in which its elements are ordered.

The organization of our cradle argument is meant to do two things, both of which serve our theoretical aims. One is to emphasize the recursive, hegemonic nature of agency. We suppose that, as a matter of empirical fact, every exercise of agency in the pursuit of some endeavor has consequences for the structure of one's agency itself. Moreover, we suppose that under favorable circumstances, every exercise of one's agency strengthens its structure—by improving its power to help us achieve our aims, and by making more dominant the norms generated by the application of our agency powers to practical problems. We think that these suppositions are well supported by psychological investigations of the elements of agency we describe here.

The other thing the cradle argument is meant to do is to suggest the futility of using extremely reductive or abstract notions of its constitutive elements for the purposes of ethical theory. Reductiveness is a special temptation because the proposal to give an account of agency appears to be a proposal to describe one among many features of our psychology. Thus the temptation is to identify agency as the power of action (as opposed to mere motion), and then to parse the concept of action to get the account of agency a priori. This yields useful discussion of the formal characteristics of desire, intention, deliberation, and choice, but it does not yield enough for stoic ethical theory. For our purposes we must have an account of agency that reminds us, even if only schematically, of the scope, variety, and complexity of the ways in which the formal features of action operate in human lives. (Our ethical theory is a naturalistic one, after all, about the lives of human beings. Other sorts of agents exist in the animal world, and still others are imaginable, but the price of thinning out the account of agency to cover them all is a purely formalistic ethic.) To get the account we need we will treat the formal features of action as formal operations on objects in a domain (agency), and our task here will be to survey not only those formal operations but the sorts of objects they range over. We will treat both the objects and the operations as constitutive elements of agency.

We will begin by sorting the constitutive elements of agency into two categories. Let us say that an element of one's agency is *received* if it is generated or acquired without the exercise of one's agency; it is *constructed* if it is produced through the exercise of one's agency.

RECEIVED ELEMENTS

The received elements are quite diverse, and they arise, erupt, develop, and are acquired anew throughout our lives, providing constant fodder for the constructive function of agency. For expository purposes we may divide received elements into two groups. In one group are all the elements that are part of our original equipment as human beings—our endowments. In the other group are those elements we acquire in ways subliminal to agency.

Endowments

Endowments include many kinds of “impulses,” as the ancient Stoics would have called them, as well as many dispositions to react or respond in a patterned way. We will also include under the heading of endowments some of the formal features of the operation of those traits (such as neurologically fixed information-processing routines), along with consciousness

and mechanisms that generate and control the level of what we may call pure agent-energy. Moreover, we will include all of the other anatomical and physiological properties that enable or limit agency's exercise—from height, weight, and opposable thumbs to redundant neurological structures. That is, we will remind ourselves and others that in our view agents are physical beings. Indeed, we will begin with a brief reminder to that effect, which would be trivial if it were not for the sort of mind-body dualism that infects ordinary speech and incautious philosophical use of it.

Bodies. Stoics are materialists; physicalists; corporealists. When we speak carefully on this point, we do not want to say that agents “have” or “inhabit” physical bodies, because that might suggest that agency is not itself a physical thing. We believe that “agency” refers to a physical entity (or perhaps set of properties) that emerges from the neural processes of some particular beings. (Not of all beings. Not, as far as we can tell, of rocks, or of dead humans.) We believe that consciousness itself is at bottom a physical thing, though of a quite distinctive sort, and we will say more about that below. But here we merely want to mention our view about the physicality of agency in order to explain our resistance to a priori accounts of it.

If we were to allow ourselves to speak as though agency were something *nonphysical* that is somehow “embodied” in various ways here and there (here in a six-foot, seventy-year-old, one-legged man, there in a six-foot, twenty-year-old, two-legged woman), we would soon be drawn to the thought that the body is incidental—that one and the same agency could theoretically have inhabited a different body from the one it does, or perhaps could even exist independently of embodiment altogether. We might then come to think that the body an agent inhabits merely defines practical possibilities for the exercise of agency by defining the practical limits on action in a particular case, but that agency itself, considered abstractly as something that can be the same thing in different embodiments, can be analyzed formally—that is, without reference to any particular embodiment. Thus we might also come to believe that we can discuss the perfection of agency without tying that notion to an account of human physiological development as studied by developmental physiologists and psychologists. We might even get the remarkable idea that we can make useful a priori normative remarks about all possible forms of rational agency and discard the notion of following the facts.

We see no warrant for doing all that, because we see no warrant for venturing into the metaphysical wilderness of mind-body *substance* dualism. What we say instead, when we are speaking carefully, is that agency is a material feature of some material bodies and that there is no reason to suppose a priori that the formal properties of agency per se (the properties that allow us to identify particular things as instances of agency)

are adequate for the ends of ethical theory. Thus we insist on considering agency as a material reality—one that undergoes characteristic and dramatic development in human beings. The differences in the material realities of different agents may be as important for ethics as their common formal properties.

Impulses. Studies of infant and child development suggest that standard agency equipment for humans includes many active traits, variously described as drives, instinctual impulses, or propensities to act. Even very young infants appear to initiate certain sorts of endeavors, including information seeking, and soon develop remarkable information-processing abilities and the propensity to use them. They soon begin to make persistent, active efforts to satisfy or reduce their biological needs, to seek sensation, comfort, or pleasure, to identify objects and make (probably subliminal) inferences about them, to explore and define the boundaries between self and other, to act on the other and on the self, and to *interact* with others. One thing we can say with confidence about the behavior of children prior to their acquisition of language is that it is characterized by persistent, goal-directed initiatives. Moreover, those initiatives are not reducible, in a theoretically useful way, to variations on a single kind of goal-directed activity or unified set of endeavors. Primal curiosity has quite a different aim than primal sensation seeking.

Responsive activity. Studies of human learning, beginning with classical and operant conditioning, have yielded a great deal of information about our characteristic reactive endowments. They describe notable stimulus-response patterns of arousal and readiness to act, for example. Some of these are telic or goal-directed and others are not (compare a flight-or-fight response to watchful alertness). Arousal readies us for further responses of all sorts, including those that engage basic learning mechanisms such as behavior reinforcement and extinction, and stimulus and response generalization. These basic processes shape our agency powers in fundamental ways throughout our lives. (For a particularly riveting example, consider the phenomenon of learned helplessness.)

Similarly, the received responsive processes that underlie self-development and social interaction are important to note here. Among these is a host of what we might call “mirroring” responses, in which our behavior reflects or mimics things around us. We vocalize in response to sounds of certain sorts and attempt to replicate them. We mirror the movement of objects in our vicinity or follow them with our gaze. We have sympathetic responses to others’ sensations and affects: delight, fear, dismay, tears, shudders, twinges, pangs that simply mirror what we see in others. We are beginning to understand the neurophysiology of such responses.

In addition to mirroring, we seem as well to be endowed with an array of basic reciprocating responses that we employ in interactions—responses

that return rather than replicate what we get from others. We are disposed to return the gaze or attention of others, their care and concern, their hostility, and so forth. These responses are quite labile but constitute a basic, uncalibrated form of reciprocal sociality.

What might be called boundary keeping should also be given special mention here. We impulsively initiate the making of the self/other boundary and the definition of a personal space or “*proprium*” but then respond to things that crowd or cross those borders in ways ranging from violent repulsion of the invasion (akin to a sphincter reflex) to greedy welcome (e.g., for food).

Information processing. Neuroscience has begun to yield tantalizing data and hypotheses about the ways in which the central nervous system is structured to process sensory information. Structural linguistics offers hypotheses about the formal features of our “language acquisition device.” Stage-theories of cognitive development suggest that such structures undergo maturational transformations.

The science is far from settled on the details but strongly suggests four things of special concern here. (a) One is that some important forms of information processing are neurologically fixed, that these fixed items include various ways of parsing, sorting, interpolating, and extrapolating information, and that such processing may be of different forms for different sorts of data (different in form for visual and for auditory data, for example). (b) Another is that these fixed features of information processing may produce persistent errors, either in the sense that the logical representation of a given part of the process shows it to be formally invalid or in the sense that a given part of the process persistently yields the prelinguistic equivalent of false beliefs. (c) A third is that cognitive development is relentlessly recursive—“leg over leg,” as Piagetians say—in the sense that whatever conceptual schemas we develop and whatever content we acquire in them themselves become the objects of (and determinants of) our subsequent development. (d) And a fourth is a built-in motivational pressure for reducing cognitive dissonance—for achieving logical consistency and connectedness (integration) among the objects of thought.

Consciousness. As might be expected from the remarks about materialism above, stoics reject any account of mental events or consciousness that depends on a dual-substance view of the distinction between mind and body. We do not, however, endorse the view that the mind and the body are identical. We follow John Searle in thinking that the phenomenon of subjectivity cannot be explained *away* by such a reductive account (in the way, for example, that the phenomenon of the sun “rising and setting” can be explained away by heliocentric orbital mechanics). And we think that the explanation eventually to be given is likely to be of a

sort that treats mental events as emergent physical processes. On this view, the mind, like the heat produced by running an electrical appliance, is distinct from the neural processes that generate it, operates in ways that require explanation of a different sort than we give for its generative processes, and has distinct causal powers and an independent existence. (Think of the way undissipated heat affects the running motor and lingers after the motor stops. Note that this analogy does nothing to illuminate the phenomenon of subjectivity or consciousness, however.) This is very deep philosophical water, and although recent work in neuroscience with respect to memory, body-image, and emergent properties of neural nets is fascinating, there is little in it so far to suggest how neural processes could cause conscious (subjective, mental) states.

The crucial thing for present purposes, however, is not to explore the metaphysical mysteries of the mind-body problem. Rather, we simply need to note that what we have in the way of neural structure evidently allows us to register and process information in two importantly different ways: in or through our awareness of it (i.e., consciously), and without our awareness of it (i.e., subconsciously). In either case the information gets recorded and processed, but the existence of two levels of processing raises the possibility that we might get inconsistent results from them. That is, the information processing done at the subconscious level may not always be congruent with the sort of practical reasoning done at the conscious level. If it were the case that such inconsistencies were fixed (e.g., by unalterable physiological processes on the one hand, and the unalterable formal properties of the logic of our conscious representation of our experience on the other), the notion of perfecting our agency would be considerably complicated.

As it is, our consciousness—and even more our self-consciousness—complicates the notion of agency substantially. The ancient Stoics were clear that agency was as much a matter of character—the nondeliberative expression of behavioral dispositions—as it was a matter of conscious deliberation and choice. But one gets the impression from the ancient texts that, in general, behavioral dispositions were supposed to arise through (or at least, in the mature agent, be brought under the control of) the process of habituation—a process in which deliberate, conscious choice becomes routinized, nondeliberative, habitual conduct. Moreover, the picture of mature agency that usually emerges in philosophical writing is one in which conscious processes have normative priority over subconscious ones and in fact ultimately control them.

In contrast, we follow contemporary psychology in holding that many elements of our agency are subconscious through and through: they are not generated by conscious processes, and they remain *subconscious* processes even in the most mature form of agency. More surprisingly,

perhaps, we have no a priori commitment to a way of living in which the conscious exercise of agency, and the conscious control of subconscious processes, predominates.

Agentic energy. A final element of our received endowments that must be mentioned in any discussion of the structure of agency is what we will call agentic energy. In ordinary language the metaphor of exhaustion is often employed to describe states in which we feel unable to exercise much in the way of agency—states in which we cannot “bring” ourselves to “do” anything very much. Weariness after prolonged exertion is one form of this, but there are many others that are equally familiar: grogginess due to lack of sleep; depression; the fever, weakness, and torpor associated with some diseases; and so on. We know from medical science that these states can be explained (and manipulated) physiologically. We can raise or lower people’s ability to exercise their agency, for example, by manipulating their energy level through their blood chemistry. And it is clear enough that some features of our physiological endowments (e.g., those involved in oxygenating the brain) will define a baseline, received-energy level that will dramatically affect the development and exercise of agency.

Received Developments

Let us now contrast endowments (bodies, primal impulses, energy) with what might be called received, nonmaturational developments of them. Endowments are part of our original equipment, so to speak, though of course some of them, such as our reproductive systems and the apparatus for our higher cognitive functions, are immature at first and their maturation is shaped by the physical and social environment in which we live. (Growth in certain parts of the central nervous system, for example, is influenced not only by nutrition but by the way we are held and handled in infancy by those who nurture us.) But development is a more complex phenomenon than can be described with the notions of the growth, maturation, and degeneration of our original equipment. It also involves the emergence of traits that are received (rather than constructed) but are not, properly speaking, endowments.

Routines. Patterns of behavior and affect soon begin to emerge out of the infant’s persistent, largely uncoordinated, multiform activity. Impulses are frustrated or sated. Responses are reciprocated or not. These events register, and have affective consequences. Active curiosity and startle responses, for example, sometimes resolve into pain or discontent, and sometimes into pleasure or satisfaction. Our behavior is conditioned by such events, and we generalize from them subconsciously. Such generalization—in cognition, affect, and conation—is then refined and fixed by further experience. Even simple iteration has this effect,

but its potency increases dramatically when some of the iterations are traumatic, or framed (e.g., by an unpredictable reinforcement schedule) so as to arouse, before the fact, anxiety or anticipation, fear or eagerness.

Among the earliest and most common “developments” we acquire in this way are behavioral routines—settled sequences of ideation, affect, or action through which our primal impulses or responses are expressed. Infants as well as adults are creatures of habit. The things we undertake repeatedly, from taking milk to taking our ease, quickly become routinized; and in the absence of distracting circumstances or adverse consequences, we proceed with them in much the same sequence of steps time after time. Such routines can, of course, become pathologically insensitive to consequences—obsessions or compulsions that have morbid or even lethal results. And it may be that we feel slightly uneasy or unsatisfied—as though something were not quite right—whenever we deviate from a well-established routine under “normal” circumstances. (“I don’t remember whether I brushed my teeth this morning?”—Well, brush them now.—“It’s not the same.”)

Nonetheless routines often increase efficiency dramatically, and routinized behavior can often be kept compatible with attention to the full range of purposive behavior in which it is embedded, and sensitive to situations in which deviation from routine would be prudent. This is a happy result, since the development of settled routines seems to be a pervasive and irrepressible feature of our lives.

Salience. To say that routinized behaviors, or dispositions generally, are sensitive to circumstance is to say that they are structured so that certain events trigger the operation of the disposition, others trigger its suspension, still others prompt temporary deviations, and still others engage learning mechanisms that work permanent changes in the routine. That is, the “context-sensitive” routines we develop may be described as dispositions for which certain events are especially salient in various ways. Just which events will become salient for a given agent is not something that can be predicted from the nature of the agent’s dispositions alone. In congested central city traffic, for example, where drivers must be alert for other cars making sudden or aggressive lane changes, one driver may learn to watch the head and arm movements of the other drivers, another may watch the front wheels of the cars, still another may factor in the types of cars in view (battered taxicab; immaculate old Volvo), and yet another may operate with only global expectations (Is this Williamsburg in New York City or Williamsburg in Virginia?). Good drivers have a large repertoire of dispositions with highly discriminating and accurate arrays of salients—many of which are learned and employed subconsciously, or at least nondeliberatively. And what is true of driving skill is true of context-sensitive dispositions generally: through standard,

nondeliberative learning mechanisms we acquire more or less elaborate and more or less accurate arrays of salients for them.

Two things about this are of special significance for the exercise of agency. One is the extent to which, and the frequency with which, such salients are acquired and employed subconsciously. The other is the way in which persistent disagreements between agents can be traced, psychologically, to differences in the subconscious salients that are factors in their deliberations.

We may think of this in terms of the complexities of pattern recognition. The cold-eyed “look” of the city bank clerk, who thinks she is merely being efficient and professional, may register with me as discourteous or actively hostile behavior, and contribute to my dislike of the city. More generally, what she regards as the marvelously coordinated, energetic, focused, productive, and richly civilized nature of city life I may see as chaotic, dangerous, dirty, and barbaric. She and I can argue about this in quick, good spirited, back-and-forth exchanges, and eventually, over time, consider the same long list of things characteristic of city life. But as long as the items on my list of grievances have no salience for her, she will simply not “see” my point. Even though she understands it intellectually, she will not “get it,” in the sense that it will not trigger in her any disposition to be wary, or fearful, or dismayed with city life. And to the extent that such differences between us depend on salients that are so deeply buried, or so complex, that we are not fully aware of them, we may be so baffled by the disagreement that we come to regard each other as irrational—or worse, as vicious. Ethnic conflict, racism, anti-Semitism, and sexism give us disheartening examples of this.

Affects. Salience is a phenomenon of cognition and conation but not necessarily of affect. The fact that something triggers a dispositional routine does not mean that it generates an affective response in the agent as well. So separate notice must be taken of the obvious: that among the most prominent nonmaturational developments in our lives are the affective states that become linked, dispositionally, to objects in our memory, experience, and imagination. Such linked affects make objects salient for us, or alter their salience, but it is worthwhile to note that they play a much more direct role in our deliberations as well. Objects linked to affects in this way are by that fact valued, and thus figure prominently in our endeavors, either as means to achieving or avoiding the affect or as ends. As we mature, these linkages—these affective associations—become deeply ingrained and richly nuanced. For aesthetes, refining, organizing, and reflecting on them escalates to a way of life. For ascetics the links are deliberately broken or ignored.

So much has been written on this topic that little needs to be added here, except perhaps for two reminders. One is just that stoics are not

committed, a priori, either to endorsing an ascetic way of life or to rejecting the life of an aesthete. The other is a caution about reductivism. Some philosophers reduce the concept of value to pro and con affects, in aid of making a sharp distinction between fact and value. For reasons that can be gleaned from chapter 3, we think this obscures matters important to ethics.

Attachments. Another received development of agency is the pattern and strength of the attachments we form more or less subconsciously with objects of various sorts—with our bodies, other people, inanimate objects, our affects, states of consciousness, or objects of thought. Attachment is a metaphor for a psychological phenomenon in which an agent first identifies something as an object that is conceptually or physically distinct from him and then comes to be more or less internally related to it, in the sense that loss of or damage to the object is loss of or damage to the self.

The nonagency processes through which attachments develop are complex. In ordinary speech we describe them with a variety of metaphors related to *oikeiōsis*: we say we appropriate the object, or incorporate it, bond with it, adhere to it, are bound to it. Whatever the processes may be, and however different they may be from person to person (for example, in a person who is deeply insecure, possessive, and introverted versus someone who has the opposite traits), attachments play a central role in the subsequent exercise of our agency. Normatively, they define categorical commitments that, because they are part of the very comprehensive project of self-preservation, are controlling for many of our other endeavors. What particularly interests stoics, however, is the relation between our contingent attachments, virtue, and happiness.

Representations and logical operations. Some of the pieces that we eventually put together into what we call reasoning are evidently hard-wired into our neurological structures. Object recognition and some primitive forms of generalization and inference may be in this category. Other elements may arise spontaneously in the process of maturation. Perhaps the “language acquisition device” is among these. We know, however, that the actual acquisition of language is a development that occurs only through social learning. And it appears that certain other fundamental elements of reasoning depend on the developed ability to represent objects symbolically. Symbolic representation enlarges memory and imagination. Representational memory and imagination make possible the development of set theoretic and logical operations (counting, class inclusion and exclusion, union, intersection, conditional inferences), and those operations in turn make possible (indeed are equivalent to) the propositional representation of experience, and the subsequent development of propositional inferences.

The propositional representation of experience infects and transforms everything it touches by putting it into consciousness in a definite form—a form that facilitates communication because it is common to everyone who shares our language, and a form that remakes our agency into a consciously reflexive process of assenting to or rejecting the propositions that represent it. These are the seeds from which the full-fledged reflexive aspect of agency is constructed.

Basic tenors of personality. What we have been considering as “received developments” here are traits that we acquire (rather than receive as endowments) but do not construct through the exercise of our agency. Among the most potent things we acquire in this way are traits of temperament or personality that the ancients sometimes referred to as basic “tenors”—fundamental frames of mind, forms of conduct, kinds and degrees of affect that shape every aspect of the exercise of our agency. Some data suggest that basic elements of some temperamental differences (“shyness,” for example) may be inborn. But it is also clear that through the iterative learning processes mentioned above, some of us become basically trusting, optimistic, confident, outgoing, benevolent, nonaggressive children with high self-esteem. Others become basically distrustful, pessimistic, anxious, introverted, malevolent, and aggressive, with low self-esteem. Some become tenacious, others persistent, still others yielding. Some develop temerity, others caution, still others timidity. Some become increasingly impulsive, others increasingly deliberative. The number of combinations of traits and degrees of traits is very large (perhaps as large as the number of human beings), and strikingly nuanced with respect to what sorts of feelings, thoughts, and conduct are evoked by a given situation.

Two questions arise immediately for our purposes. One is whether, and to what degree, such basic tenors control the development and exercise of our agency. The other is whether we can identify a “healthy” tenor, and if so what its relation is to the perfection of agency. (It would be circular merely to define a psychologically healthy tenor as one that is conducive to the perfection of agency.) We will postpone the discussion of those issues to the relevant sections below.

CONSTRUCTED ELEMENTS

We receive, from our endowments and developments, a moment-by-moment supply of purposive activity—aims defined by consciousness of primal impulses or patterns of response, organized around affects and attachments of various sorts, regulated by our energy levels and basic tenors of personality, structured and implemented by dispositions to act that are triggered by salient experience. This is a primal form of agency,

consisting initially of uncoordinated, easily interruptible activity. As we develop and begin to use the ability to represent this purposive activity symbolically, however, and begin to manipulate those symbolic representations logically, a secondary form of agency arises, driven by this representational and logical activity. The process seems to go in more or less the following way, in the absence of disease, injury, or oppressive conditions.

Memory, imagination, and generalization. The increased ability to remember and imagine that comes with these powers makes clear to us the multiplicity of our projects and allows us to be aware of the history of our attempts to carry them out and to become aware of patterns of success and failure. We also actively look for patterns in our activities and represent them in generalizations. (Studies of language acquisition, for example, show that children learn their first few irregular verbs accurately, by imitation, but soon begin to “correct” themselves by generalizing from the far more numerous regular verbs they are learning.) We then begin to represent those patterns in conditional propositions. This crucial development allows us to represent some features of our activities as consequences of others, as means to our ends, as necessary or sufficient conditions for them. We are also able to represent the operation of salients in triggering our dispositions to act. (The propositional schema “If S then A” represents the conditional form of the dispositional relation between my recognition of some salient S and my acting in a given way A. Thus when I recognize the salient and then act, the form of the whole process is represented by “If S then A, and S. Then A.”) Mapping the dispositional structure of our activities onto logical operations in this way represents them as forms of elementary practical reasoning.

Propositional representation. Next come several simultaneous and equally important developments of practical reasoning. We become profligate in our efforts to understand every aspect of our experience in propositional terms. (So profligate, say the advocates of right-brain living and other romantics, that we begin to distort or lose contact with our intuitive, spontaneous, emotional side.) We generalize compulsively about our activities and the world around us and construct elaborate representations of the structure of our projects—perhaps in narrative terms, perhaps in terms of rule-governed endeavors. We just as compulsively revise those generalizations, narratives, and rules when for whatever reason we become dissatisfied with them. (Perhaps, for example, because irregular verbs persist in the speech of people we are trying to imitate.) Uncertainty and anxiety about our ability to get these representations “right” arises, but at the same time we develop routines that incorporate elementary practical reasoning into more and more of our other activities, and we strive for congruence between the conclusions we reach and the results we achieve.

Deliberation and choice. When we achieve such congruence regularly in some area, we often begin to use the conclusions of our practical reasoning routines to guide our conduct—either in place of or as a retrospective assessment of subliminal determinates of action. That is, the process of deliberation and choice becomes a determinative condition of (some of) our conduct.

In particular, deliberation and choice become reflexive, determinative conditions of revisions of their own routines. The effort to get the practical reasoning right is in part the attempt to generalize, regularize, and make practical inferences about the reasoning process itself. Success in this reflexive effort to improve the congruence between practical conclusions and outcomes motivates the wider, and more deeply dispositional, incorporation of practical reasoning routines into the determinative conditions of action in our various endeavors. Thus unhindered primal agents construct and recursively reconstruct themselves into agents who deliberate and choose in an increasingly determinative way in an increasing number of their endeavors.

It should be noted, of course, that the notion of unhindered agency, like that of frictionless motion, is a theoretical fiction. The self-constructive exercise of agency is often hindered even by the simplest forms of conditioning and social learning, especially when routine failures are coupled with a pessimistic, passive, or anxious basic tenor of personality.

Constructed traits. Nonetheless, in whatever endeavors deliberation and choice (henceforth, agency or full-fledged agency, as opposed to primal agency) become determinative conditions of our conduct, we begin to construct rather than merely develop all the elements of our agency that play a part in those endeavors. That is, we begin to deliberate about and undertake to shape or control our primal impulses, patterned responses, affects, attachments, and so on, as well as the logical operations of our agency itself. And agency is robust. Even if its initial self-constructive activity is greatly hindered, when it operates in any of our reasonably complex activities it will exert persistent infiltrative pressure on many others. This is so because complex endeavors—especially if they are either long lasting or frequently repeated—will be entangled with a wide assortment of primal impulses, responses, and attachments that also enter as determinants into many other endeavors. If, through the exercise of our agency, we shape or control those things in one endeavor, we will (through mechanisms of generalization in both primal and full-fledged agency) try to do the same in closely analogous endeavors and, if successful there, continue in this stepwise fashion.

Impulse control. Consider the way an infant learns impulse control. First, perhaps, he is simply trained—conditioned—to sit rather than squirm in the restraints of a high chair for meals. Mechanisms of stimulus and response generalization may then more or less automatically extend

this to similar situations. (The high chair for play; an infant seat in the car.) The infant becomes a child and begins to do elementary practical reasoning—suppose by cooperating (fitfully) with his parents' efforts to train him to sit in a normal chair for meals. Suppose that (unbeknownst to his parents) his agency becomes a determinant of his behavior in this matter. He experiments with various policies: squirm when the adults are distracted, because you can get away with it; sit still when the aunts visit because father punishes every little infraction then; squirm when you are sick, because that just increases mother's loving concern; sit especially still at special meals in the dining room when the good china is being used, unless you really want to provoke a scene, in which case the best tactic is to be jittery, to slump, to spill food on the tablecloth, to kick the table legs accidentally on purpose, and, when rebuked, to dive under the table and refuse to move. Notice that acting on these rules takes considerable control of a wide variety of impulses and responses. For example, if you really want to provoke a scene in front of company, you have to be pitiless about your parents' embarrassment, and ready to deflect their most ingenious attempts to interfere. Incentives of unimaginable attractiveness may be offered; horrific punishments threatened. All these things must be as nothing to you. That kind of control at a formal dinner prepares you in an outstanding way for similar ventures in church, or school, or the doctor's office. Agency infiltrates these analogous activities. And so on. In this way, starting even with badly hindered or restricted agency, we soon construct (i.e., reform and deliberately control) a very wide range of our primal behavioral dispositions.

There is every reason to suppose, moreover, that while the general outlines of the dispositions we construct for ourselves will be similar to those that other similarly situated and equipped agents construct for themselves, the details will vary remarkably from person to person. This is a deterministic process, but subtle differences in the antecedents that generate each step can generate remarkable diversity even in the ways children provoke their parents, let alone the ways in which adults goad each other. We will comment here only on the general outlines of some traits that are especially prominent in human personality generally.

Reciprocity. Reciprocity is one of these traits. Beginning from the patterns of reciprocal response built into and developed in our primal agency, we typically construct and dispositionalize intricate generalizations about when and how to respond to the benefits and harms we receive at the hands of others. Autistics and pathologically withdrawn children are exceptions, but exceptions that show how unusual—how extreme—the antecedent conditions must be to inhibit the development and eventual construction of this fundamental trait. What happens under even very harsh conditions is not that we fail to construct the trait but

that we construct it to fit our harsh circumstances. We generalize from the experience we have with reciprocation, and that means some of us become literalistic about what is fitting and proportionate (returning a kiss with a kiss, a slap with a slap), while others become much more imaginative (a warm letter for a kiss, hard words for a slap). Some of us give up proportionality, becoming extravagantly generous in response to benefits or implacably vengeful about injuries. Some of us adopt indirect forms of reciprocity as well as direct ones; some of us cultivate a wide form of reciprocity that is triggered by all the goods others provide rather than just those we invite or eventually accept.

Benevolence. Benevolence is a related trait. We may begin life as greedy little egoists, but it is clear enough that we soon spontaneously develop matching affective responses to what we read as signs of others' pleasures and pains. In a reasonably rich social environment we then begin to have a significant amount of vicarious affective experience, which is either pleasant or unpleasant in itself, and some of which is useful in anticipating the behavior of others. It thus behooves us to learn to read others' affects accurately, so that we can anticipate their behavior correctly, and it behooves us to do what we can to elicit positive experience in others, so we can share it (rather than its opposite) vicariously. These empathic responses develop and are refined initially in primal agency. In that sphere also we develop an independent affection for others' having positive affective experience. But when we exercise full-fledged agency on these matters, we represent our vicarious experience propositionally, by thinking of it as being a (nonpropositional) representation of others' experience in our own. And that thought both intensifies our vicarious experience and licenses a host of analogical arguments about the nature (and value to them) of others' affects. Others then become substitution instances in universalizable rules we make about our own behavior. If my thought is that you ought to help me (or please me) just because I am suffering (or desire to be pleased), then logically that holds for anyone who is like me, and who is suffering (or desires to be pleased) like me. We are alike. So if our situations are reversed, it follows that I ought to help you (or please you) when you suffer (or desire to be pleased).

That and similar principles of active benevolence or beneficence are routinely constructed and dispositionalized by agents. Some of us construct heavy restrictions on who is like us (local humans only, for example); others generalize to all humans, or to humans and some animals as well. Some of us link this disposition to reciprocity in such a way that bad behavior from others quickly suspends it; others persist in their active benevolence without reciprocation. And so on.

Emotionality. In general, emotionality is also a constructed trait. What begins as spontaneous affect is soon shaped in the arena of social learning.

Just as we are taught to sit still at meals, we are taught when and where various sorts of emotional outbursts are permissible—or required. From early in childhood, our rage, glee, fear, erotic delight, pain, and so on are all elaborately tailored by punishment, reinforcement, and imitation of the behavior of others. We learn not only how to control the expression of the feelings we have but how and when to have those feelings.

Consider the response of a toddler who trips and falls suddenly, skinning his knee. What will he do if his mother shows happy surprise, scoops him up encouragingly in her arms in a way that reinforces his interest in playing, distracts him momentarily by straightening his shirt, and then helps him examine the wound with clinical interest? By contrast, what will he do if his mother shrieks in alarm, scoops him up protectively in a way that focuses his attention on his pain, and mirrors his fear and pain by responding sympathetically to his cries? We have all seen the difference, and it is a remarkable one. It is a difference not only in how much (or whether) the toddlers cry and stop playing to devote themselves to this new endeavor but evidently in how much pain they experience as well. (Think of the use of distraction and counterirritants in medical practice. The alcohol wipe and firm pinch of flesh before the needle-stick have more than one use.)

When we begin to deliberate and choose in our activities, we add a powerful new determinant to the process of our sentimental education. We begin to construct our emotions along several dimensions—by reflecting on the *occasions* when certain emotions are appropriate, the appropriate *amplitude* of the emotion, the *duration* of it, the manner in which it is *expressed*, and the ways in which it is a *determinant* of our conduct in other endeavors. (Is it appropriate to be sexually aroused by someone at the funeral of a mutual friend? How strongly, or persistently, aroused? How overtly can such arousal be expressed in such a case? Should you allow it to interfere with the rituals of mourning your friend?) We make decisions about such things across the whole emotional field, and through repetition and habituation we construct both the interior nature of our emotional lives and our expression of it.

The extraordinary variety in the ways people construct their emotions is a large part of what makes social life interesting. But it should also be noted that social and personal life cannot be very satisfying overall unless we have emotional dispositions that broadly serve the purposes of our endeavors. (We ask our neurosurgeons to leave their grief and sexual arousal outside the operating room.) This is the point that has so often been distorted in hostile discussions of stoic doctrine. Stoics do not recommend a toned-down emotional life for everyone. We recommend an artfully constructed emotional life that enhances rather than obstructs the full range of our endeavors, in the full range of circumstances in

which we pursue them. This is compatible with recommending an intense and expressive emotional life in conditions where it is prudent and productive for the agent, as long as the agent is dispositionally equipped to modulate those emotions when circumstances change. Impulsive wailing in fear and grief is not something you want when you are hiding from the enemy.

Courage, endurance, and perseverance. We make a different point about three traits. Courage we define simply as the ability to act—to exercise our agency—despite fear. Thus deliberately fleeing, or surrendering, can be as courageous as fighting if it (rather than fighting) is what you fear. Endurance is the ability to act despite pain, discomfort, weariness, or difficulty. Perseverance is the ability to act despite failure. These traits simply strengthen agency and enlarge the realm of possibility for its exercise. Thus they contribute to its perfection, and hence to virtue. One cannot be excessively courageous or excessively able to endure or persevere. One might use such abilities inappropriately, but that is a different matter. (Fearlessness is by definition not courage at all, and whatever the excessive element is in reckless abandon, it is not excessive courage as defined here. Similar points can be made about endurance and perseverance. The excessive elements in pointless suffering or intransigence are in the use of the abilities, not the abilities themselves.)

These abilities are in part developments, through subliminal learning, of primal agent energy and basic tenors of personality. But they are also heavily constructed. We rehearse ourselves into courage by deliberately putting ourselves in scary but controlled situations. We build endurance and perseverance in protracted competitive or adversarial endeavors. Stoics thoroughly approve of this, and that fact has often been ignored in attacks on the Axiom of Futility.

Attachment. Attachment is also subject to construction, and stoic recommendations on the matter have been systematically misunderstood in the modern era. (It is worthwhile noting that the antistocic polemics of antiquity do not typically attack stoic doctrines about dispassionate detachment.) To understand them properly, modern readers should take care to reflect, not only on the sort of attachments characteristic of loving personal relationships but also on the sort characteristic of vendettas, holy wars, genocidal campaigns of ethnic cleansing, and mindless loyalty. Properly understood, the motivation for stoic concerns here is not controversial.

In the normal course of development we become attached to many sorts of objects—parents, security blankets, beliefs, body images, lovers, land, houses, institutions, and so on. These attachments are all shaped by social learning, just as our emotional responses are. And when we begin to exercise our agency with respect to them we notice that they can differ

importantly in strength, depth, and dissemination throughout the structure of our personalities. We may be very firmly attached to something, be prepared to resist its loss fiercely, and yet find that when we do lose it the wound is only superficial.

Think of the way a child may fight wildly to keep his favorite jeans, now too small for him, from going to his little brother for whom they are still too big. As long as this strong attachment is superficial, so that the child is easily assuaged by a replacement pair, we are typically not too concerned. But if the attachment is not only strong but deep, so that the loss has a profound, enduring effect on the child, perhaps such that he feels aggrieved for days or weeks whenever he thinks of it, we may reasonably think this is pathological. (Or that the jeans are not the issue after all.) And if the attachment to the jeans is not only strong and deep but also widely disseminated in the child's personality, so that he feels the loss in connection to almost everything he does, we will be even more concerned for his mental health (or for getting a better understanding of what is going on).

Adults train children with respect to the appropriate strength, depth, and dissemination of various attachments. Some of us are trained to have the sort of attachments to kin that equip us to carry on obsessive blood feuds, or the sort of attachments to church doctrine that equip us to torture heretics into professions of faith, or the sort of attachments to holy lands that equip us to wage perpetual war and to assassinate those who give up portions of the land for peace. Some of us are trained to have the sort of attachments to our parents, children, spouses, or lovers that equip us to be psychologically crippled by losing them—inconsolable, unable to cease our mourning or even suspend it to carry on daily routines. Some of us are trained to have no deep or disseminated attachments at all, just as some of us are trained to have only chilly emotions.

When we begin to deliberate and choose with respect to our attachments, we inevitably begin to construct them. Stoics have arguments to offer about how these elements of our personalities should be constructed. There will be more about them in the discussions of perfected agency, virtuous activity, and happiness that follow, but for the moment, a cursory summary will suffice.

We simply hold that it is wise to calibrate the strength, depth, and dissemination of our attachments to the fragility and transience of the objects involved. (The ancients were fond of expressing this in terms of the distinction between things that are within our control, or are “up to us,” and those that are not. But in some cases this can be misleading.) Irremovable, unchangeable objects, such as the number one, are fair game for any sort of attachment. Since such objects cannot be lost, our attachments to them (as opposed to our affects for them) can never become a practical problem. People may attach themselves, with our blessing, in

whatever way they please to numbers (as opposed to numeric nursery blocks). We dispute the wisdom, however, of developing any attachments at all to particular mayflies or subatomic particles.

Between those poles we oppose unconditionally only one sort of attachment: the sort whose rupture makes us incapable of exercising our agency. That means we are very reluctant to endorse any attachment that is maximally strong, deep, and disseminated. It does not mean, however, that we endorse only weak, superficial attachments. On the contrary, strong and deep attachments can be so encapsulated (undisseminated) in our personalities that we can continue to exercise our agency despite their rupture. (One child is dead, and another needs rescue. Parents who can rescue the living child despite the loss of the other have encapsulated attachments, nonetheless strong or deep—and we add virtuous—for being so.)

Generalization, consistency, and rules of thumb. The motivation to generalize is found in the most primitive processes of primal agency—that is, in the stimulus and response generalization phenomena of classical and operant conditioning. The process of language acquisition shapes and amplifies such generalization by giving it a propositional representation that can be used in deliberation and choice. And language acquisition adds another new element to this process: rule making, or regularization. (Recall the child's attempts to regularize verbs.) When such generalization and regularization are then themselves represented in further deliberation and choice—that is, in the exercise of our agency on the processes of generalization and regularization—they are soon constructed through trial and error into an elaborate endeavor to think and act consistently. That endeavor, in turn, involves representing generalizations and rules as the consequents of quantified conditionals—conditionals that specify the antecedent conditions under which the consequents are true and whether they are true for one, some, all, or a particular number or percentage of instances. That then involves constructing a way of assessing the truth of conditionals, and the validity of inferences based on them.

All of that routinely happens in childhood when, unless they are extremely deprived, people commonly construct a serviceable set of elementary argument forms and criteria for truth—though not of course in the rigorous way employed by logicians and epistemologists. For most human beings, this informal, unsystematic, yet serviceable sort of practical intelligence (*phronesis*)—that is, simply the endeavor to think and act *consistently*, in the rudimentary way indicated—is a very robust trait. It is robust in the sense that even a little practical success with it tends to disseminate its use quickly and widely in our endeavors.

Constructed agentic powers: practical intelligence, integrated activity. As we begin to rationalize our deliberative processes and apply them in

various endeavors, we often find ourselves at dead ends. Even within a single endeavor our deliberation may be deadlocked by conflicting goals, requirements, goods, attachments, and so forth that are not hierarchically ordered, or norms that are too vague to be determinate. Moreover, when deliberative processes begin to be widely disseminated across the whole range of our endeavors, we find that some of them are isolated from others in the sense that we have no way of ordering the norms of one with respect to the norms of another. Thus conflicts between normative demands from different endeavors cannot be resolved by deliberation.

Insofar as we are motivated to persist in exercising our agency through deliberation and choice in all these situations, we are motivated to construct ways of breaking deadlocks. That means we must construct ways of assessing endeavors so as to get determinate results from our deliberations within them. And that, in turn, means that we must find ways to make the ordinal relationships between norms, both within and across endeavors, complete, as well as to bring closure to deliberations in which norms are undeterminative for other reasons. Further, we are motivated to generalize and regularize these matters, so that we are not always deliberating case by case.

All this generates impressive and persistent attempts to make our endeavors internally coherent, to integrate various endeavors both vertically and horizontally, and to do this in terms of general principles or rules. We accomplish this in part by constructing various kinds of “critical” endeavors through which we embed one in another, order their norms, amend them, and so on. The theoretical end point of this form of practical intelligence is a complete, consistent, and determinate decision procedure for ordering all of the elements of our activity, present and future. In practice, the end point is typically far short of this.

Constructed self-concept, integrity. Among the first stirrings of primal agency is the exploration of the boundaries between the self and the other with the formation of what some neuroscientists call a body-image—the mapping, in consciousness, of various tactile sensations (pressure, heat, etc.) onto locations in our body parts. Concurrently we develop ways of identifying objects that occur repeatedly in our experience—in effect, some criteria of sameness, difference, and continuity, with respect to both the self and other objects. We also develop boundary-making and boundary-keeping behavioral dispositions (expulsion, incorporation) that further define the self-other distinction, and the consciousness of ourselves as agents (self-consciousness) adds still another element.

By the time we develop the ability to represent the self-other distinction symbolically, we not only have a sharply defined body to refer to as the self but a growing assortment of memories, attachments, projects, emotions, and behavioral dispositions as well that we include in our

consciousness of ourselves as agents. As we then begin to construct rather than merely receive the elements of our agency, we construct a self-concept as well, by deliberating about, selecting, and helping circumstances to train ourselves to regard some things (including, perhaps, some imaginary or idealized things) as constitutive of the self, and other things (perhaps some of our actual traits) as not constitutive of it.

Moreover, this constructed self-concept is something to which we typically become attached, even when, perhaps as a consequence of the basic tenors of our personality and conditioning, what we have constructed is a thing we fear or loathe. Once we become attached to our self-concept, the maintenance of it becomes a practical issue—an issue that arises whenever we see in ourselves traits or behavior that we recognize as inconsistent with it. Such inconsistency makes it difficult (in the presence of the rationality we have also acquired) to continue to regard our favored self-concept as what it was constructed to be; namely, an accurate representation of the self as it is. Thus one sort of “integrity project” arises: an endeavor to exercise our agency in ways that are consistent with our image of ourselves.

Furthermore, insofar as we integrate our endeavors vertically and horizontally, by pursuing the project of making them internally coherent and mutually consistent, and insofar as the level of integration that we achieve (or aim for) is incorporated into our self-concept, then an additional integrity project arises: an endeavor to maintain an integrated or unified array of activities.

These integrity projects should be sharply distinguished from endeavors simply to protect, burnish, and revel in one’s self-image. A concern about integrity is not simply a concern about image; it is rather a concern about consistency—about the match between the image and the reality. It is vulnerable to virulent pathogens—for instance, various forms of self-deception and narcissism. But it is also one of the principal ways in which agency is exercised to create stable traits of character, consistent patterns of behavior, and a coherent way of life.

Healthy Agency: Complexity, Development toward Virtue

HEALTH AND HEALTHY AGENCY

We can give an account of healthy human agency in much the same way we can give an account of a healthy human body. Stoics are corporealists; physicalists; materialists. In this case that means we regard healthy agency, and a healthy psychology generally, as aspects of physical health. We recognize, however, that given the way health is currently discussed, it is wise to keep pressing the point about the inclusion of psychological

health in the discussion. The circumstances of healthy agency (i.e., the conditions under which it is practically possible to achieve and sustain it) are thus a subset of the circumstances of physical and psychological health. In particular, these are the conditions under which the elements of primal agency can thrive, develop into agency proper, and then continue to provide material for its constructive processes. (Without the continued workings of the elements of primal agency, agency proper soon becomes inert.) This requires, among other things, the nutrition necessary for agent energy, protection from predators and the elements, scope for unhindered activity, and enough success and benevolent, reciprocating care and concern from other agents to ensure that the elements of primal agency are not extinguished by conditioning or social learning mechanisms.

A perfectly healthy human body has a complete and intact structure, standardly configured; all the parts of that structure, from skeleton to skin, function in their nominal ways (lungs as lungs, for example, not merely as bellows); the integrated systems of parts necessary for sustaining life (respiration, digestion, and so on) also function nominally and homeostatically; growth and development of the structure is timely and complete; disease is absent; the body thrives.

A perfectly healthy agency likewise has a complete inventory of intact, nominally functional elements and integrated, homeostatic systems whose development is timely and complete. Among other things this means that its endowments (body, primal impulses and responses, consciousness, information processing, and so on) enable rather than hinder developed traits (basic tenors of personality and so on), which in turn both preserve endowments and enable rather than hinder the exercise of agency in constructing the elements of agency proper (benevolence, reciprocity, affect, emotions, and so forth). These constructed traits, moreover, both preserve agency's received elements and enable rather than hinder the continued exercise of agency proper.¹

HEALTHY AGENCY, VIRTUE, AND VICE

Thus the picture of healthy agency that emerges here is just the picture of psychological health, with special reference to its agency powers. And naturalists that we are, stoics think it is no coincidence that the picture of psychological health maps so well onto the ordinary conception of moral character or virtue, while psychopathology has correlates in vice. A healthy psychology is capable of a very large number of variations of course, but all of them will exclude or render ineffective the basic

¹ As discussed elsewhere (Becker 2012), it also requires habilitation in a reasonably hospitable, multigenerational, social and physical environment.

personality tenors (phobias, distrust, pessimism, depression) that paralyze agentic powers to act, or render agents unable to feel or express empathy, or unable to take a benevolent interest in others. All the healthy variations will exclude or render ineffective the extremely asocial (autistic or introverted) dispositions that prevent the development of cooperation, reciprocity, conviviality, and benevolent initiatives. All will exclude the extremely antisocial dispositions that generate acting out unprovoked malice, hostility, and deliberately injurious attacks on others—though such vicious impulses, and the dispositions to indulge fantasies about them in thought, stories, and conversation, may remain. All these nascent virtues and vices will exclude, however, the sort of ungovernable impulsiveness and emotionality that make the self-protective exercise of agency impossible. All will also exclude the sort of extreme anhedonia and detachment that caricaturists (falsely) attribute to the stoic sage. Moreover, the picture of psychological health will *include* effective powers of deliberation and choice, and the disposition to use them. It will include curiosity, abundant agent energy, a developed self-concept, and a disposition to regularize, to seek consistency and integration within and among one's endeavors.

Agency at this level of development can be far from consistent with the standards of ordinary morality, let alone ordinary wisdom. It is, for example, consistent with a good deal of weakness in the dispositions that characterize agency—weakness that is not evident in fortunate circumstances but which may have damaging or even lethal consequences in especially stressful, threatening, or extreme situations. (The comparable point on the side of bodily health is a more or less weak constitution—one sufficient for health in ordinary circumstances but vulnerable to disease or injury in unusually stressful ones.) It is, of course, even more troubling that some nonnaturalistic ethical systems deliberately try to truncate the development of healthy agency in ways that build in weakness, submissiveness, ignorance, or agentic incompetence. Think of the attempt to create docile slave populations, or underclasses, or subjugated women.

Stoic ethical theory certainly opposes this and argues on naturalistic grounds against any attempt to truncate the development of healthy agency or to keep it weak.

THE MOTIVATION FOR HEALTHY AGENCY AND ITS VIRTUES

We assume that agents characteristically prefer health to the lack of it, and thus that the endeavor to become and remain healthy is always motivated for us all—even though in particular circumstances the motivation may be quite weak. In what sorts of cases is it plausible to imagine the reverse?

Suppose we say, uncharitably in order to test the assumption, that hypochondriacs more or less deliberately make themselves ill; half-hearted suicides deliberately injure themselves; anorexics and bulimics deliberately ignore their health; malingerers deliberately prolong their disabilities. Is it plausible to think that these cases reflect a preference for ill health over health? Note that, as typically understood, they are not cases in which the agent seeks ill health for its own sake. Rather, illness or injury is sought as a means for achieving some other end—for gaining the attention, love, and care of others, for example—and it seems plausible to think that if the agents involved could find ways to both achieve these other ends and preserve their health, then they would (other things equal) prefer to do so.

That leaves us with the question of whether there are more exotic cases in which agents seek ill health for its own sake. We can imagine such cases (or rather, we can see that they are logically possible), but we cannot find convincing ones in our experience, nor are the imaginary ones consistent with plausible psychological theories. Weak as the motivation for preserving our health may sometimes be, the persistent preference for health is enough to license the general claim that an agent's endeavor to perfect her agency will in part be the endeavor to perfect its health, and consequently its healthy agency, and the attraction to virtue and antipathy to vice built into it.

FITNESS, VIRTUOSITY, AND VERSATILITY

A powerful feature of healthy agency that John Rawls (1971, 426) labels the Aristotelian Principle licenses some further claims. Rawls puts the principle this way: "Other things equal, human beings enjoy the exercise of their realized capacities . . . , and this enjoyment increases the more the capacity is realized, or the greater its complexity." We join him in taking this motivational assumption to be well supported (however indirectly) by various findings of modern psychology. And the principle supports the view that just as agents persistently prefer health to the lack of it, they prefer fitness to health and virtuosity to fitness—where fitness is defined as excellence for a given circumstance or purpose, and virtuosity maximizes various properties of fitness. Moreover, when agents construct and exercise practical intelligence in a variety of endeavors, they come to prefer versatile, adaptable versions of fitness and virtuosity to specialized, unadaptable forms of those things. A continuation of the physical health example will illustrate this and help explicate its connection to virtue.

Physical fitness is the result of training a more or less healthy body to function especially well for a given purpose. The purpose may be the prevention of cardiovascular disease; the development of work-related

abilities, athletic prowess, self-esteem, or beauty; the attempt to compensate for a disability; and so forth. Whatever the purpose, the training is designed to adjust the size, strength, flexibility, speed, skill, stability, or control of one's body well beyond the minimum required for physical health, up to a level of excellence or fitness for the purpose.

Psychological fitness is analogous, and fitness in the case of agency proper is the result of increasing the scope, strength, speed, accuracy, stability, control, and effectiveness of one's powers of deliberation and choice—and of the traits constructed through the exercise of those powers—for practical purposes generally. That means making one's agency powers effective (i.e., adequately engaged, strong, quick, accurate, and so on) across the whole range of one's endeavors, and part of that is making sure that all the considerations practically relevant to the joint success of all our pursuits enter into the process of undertaking each of them.

The Development of Moral Agency

The motivation to be a fit agent is thus in part the motive to make the effective exercise of agency comprehensive and controlling. And when the exercise of agency proper actually becomes comprehensively effective in our lives, we may plausibly say that we are satisfying in practice the Axiom of Encompassment and the Axiom of Finality (chapter 4). This is so because we are then, in effect, making practical reasoning all things considered our most comprehensive and controlling endeavor, even if it is often employed subconsciously, or only as a retrospective corrective to intuitive or routinized behavior.

COMPREHENSIVE FITNESS AND COMMONSENSE PRACTICAL WISDOM

It is worth sketching quickly here what this comprehensive sort of fitness might require for a given agent. In part we need to do this to clarify the connection between fit agency and explicit practical reasoning. But the main point is to call attention to the fact that what counts as agency fitness varies greatly across the population. It is determined by (and thus varies widely with respect to) the range and character of the agent's *actual* endeavors. Effective hostage negotiators need rather different agency powers than members of an assault team; people who sell used cars on commission need a different psychological profile than pediatric nurses; logicians need specialized knowledge and skills that are largely irrelevant to plumbers; citizens of a stable, wealthy, postindustrial, liberal democracy need rather different deliberative powers than homesteaders on a dangerous frontier.

We should note that one thing that varies especially widely as agents move from negotiators to soldiers to nurses to logicians and so on is the extent to which they need agency powers fit for sustained, explicit deliberation before action, as opposed to agency fitted with expert routines that are then subject to retrospective assessment. Even among deliberative types, the need for quick conclusions varies widely. (Tenured philosophers who can write good articles in medical ethics cannot necessarily do good work as consultants in a clinical setting.) Similarly, the extent to which fit agency requires a theoretical understanding of practical reasoning (say of the problem of cyclical or intransitive preferences) is equally dependent on the nature of our activities.

Prior to such specialization, however, as it manages development toward increasingly comprehensive fitness, practical intelligence needs to be transformed into what might be called a commonsense variety of practical wisdom. This it does by appropriating settled judgments from the nascent virtue of wisdom about the way things generally work in the world. This includes general understandings among competent adults about cause and effect in the parts of the physical and social worlds various human beings inhabit. But it also includes general understandings about strategic matters—that is, about how best to manage one’s conduct in situations in which the outcome depends as much on the response of other people as on one’s own conduct. Practical wisdom then develops into a form of strategic intelligence. It is not based (yet, or perhaps ever) on a game theoretic understanding of strategic situations. But it is based on a sort of commonsense wisdom acquired by adults in the normal course of their interactions with others, in a variety of social environments. This has consequences for the way practical intelligence (now in the process of becoming practical wisdom) manages a variety of conflicting endeavors so as to optimize their success in the social world. It also has consequences, over time, for the ways in which the nascent virtues and vices that develop in healthy agency are modified and reprioritized. Think about the way fit agents adapt (or not) to novel physical and social situations: middle school, high school, college, entry-level employment, induction into the military, marriage, raising children, and so forth. Successful adaptation throughout one’s life can usually be managed with commonsense wisdom and good practical intelligence—together with a little coaching from the sidelines.

MORAL EDUCATION AND VIRTUOSITY

Beyond fitness, but along the same line of improvement over mere health, lies virtuosity—an ability developed to the upper limit of some human capacity. The standard here is not the limit of the agent’s own capacity but

the limit of (known) practical possibilities for human beings as such. And virtuosos often set new standards. The intensity of general admiration and interest in them is evidence for a general preference for virtuosity over mere fitness, and thus its pursuit is typically and persistently motivated for agents generally.

Two things work against the effective incorporation of this motive into the endeavors of most agents, however. One is just that virtuosity for a given agent in a given endeavor is not possible, for reasons outside his control. But a more interesting one is the way in which virtuosity is sometimes *incompatible* with versatility and adaptability. The bulked-up muscles of a virtuoso bodybuilder may exclude her from many other pursuits (ballet, or competitive swimming, for example). The intellectual dispositions of a virtuoso rational-choice theorist may likewise exclude him from polite company. And even when virtuosity in one thing (say, singing grand opera) does not actually exclude the agent from another (say, singing the blues), it sometimes diminishes her fitness for it in a significant and irreversible way. If to save your life you cannot disguise the operatic or bluesy nature of your voice, then if you have to save your life by singing, you may regret your inflexibility.

Versatility and adaptability produce fitness for a wide range of practical possibilities, particularly unanticipated or unwanted ones. To the extent that we have a wide range of projects, or our circumstances are unsettled, we may have a strong preference for versatility and adaptability over the sort of virtuosity that dramatically limits our options or threatens to diminish, rather than optimize, the success of our endeavors generally. There are, of course, cases in which virtuosity necessarily includes versatility and adaptability. Athletes fit for the decathlon must be versatile, and while virtuosos of this sport do not typically hold world records in any one of the ten events, they typically outperform any of the world record holders overall. That is the point of the sport.

What is of interest here is the sense in which virtuoso agency is also, and necessarily, as versatile and adaptable as is required for the optimization of the agent's practically possible endeavors. That is the point of agency proper. There is thus no opportunity for motivational conflict here between virtuosity and versatility. For agency, health is preferred to the lack of it, fitness is preferred to health, and because virtuosity requires versatility, it is unproblematically the end beyond fitness.

Fit, versatile, and adaptable agency stays on the path to stoic moral agency—and from there to stoic virtue, and the stoic eudaimonia that inevitably results. It is moral agency because it seeks to channel all its resources into a coherent effort to optimize its success in achieving its virtuous endeavors through the activity of the agent's own healthy agentic powers, guided by practical wisdom. But this is the point at which

various accounts of virtue ethics begin to diverge, because the need for theoretically informed moral education emerges here. Since this is a book about stoic virtue ethics, it will continue to describe the stoic developmental path, considering divergent paths only as necessary.

Ideal stoic agency is virtuoso agency. The standard here, as with virtuosity generally, is that of an ability developed to the limit of human capability, and not merely to the limit of a given agent's capability. The elements of such ability in this case, then, are ones that would be available only to the most favorably endowed and situated human beings, whose agency (to meet the requirement of virtuosic versatility and adaptability) has been developed and constructed to contend successfully with the widest array of endeavors that are practically possible for such humans in the widest possible range of both favorable and unfavorable circumstances. It is true that ideal agency is not the magnification of pathological traits—for instance, of autism, paralyzing anxiety or depression, or physical or cognitive deficits. Rather, it is a product of the activity of healthy primal agency, made fit and coordinated into completely integrated endeavors that are then optimized and effectively controlled by the exercise of healthy agency proper (by way of the traits it constructs), and subsequently raised beyond fitness to the limit of success that is humanly possible.

So the “widest possible range of endeavors” referred to here obviously does not include the effects of the sorts of deficits and ill health that prevent the development of healthy (and thence fit) agency. But virtuoso agents are made, not born, and they are made by having to learn to cope with passion, fear, pain, loss, depression, disappointment, malevolence, failure, and so on as well as the opposites. Powers of imagination and generalization greatly reduce the amount of direct experience necessary for such learning. One does not have to commit violent crimes, or be the victim of them, in order to develop the sort of agency needed to cope with one's criminal impulses and others' crimes. But one does have to have experience of a sort that generalizes adequately, where the test of adequacy ultimately rests on what happens in other people's direct experience. Severely sheltered lives thus stunt the development of agency, and it is reasonable to think that even a rather loose approximation of ideal agency would require a long, full, complex, challenging, and worldly life.

It is not plausible to think that ideal agents, let alone loose approximations of them, must all live even roughly the same kind of life. They must all be perfectly wise—that is, sages—and that is a significant kind of uniformity (by itself enough to put sagehood permanently in the category of a thought experiment for everyone we know). Not that wisdom requires omniscience. But sages must know as much as is humanly possible about things relevant to integrating all the endeavors that they

themselves might have, and about optimizing their success in the entire range of circumstances they might possibly face. That, in turn, means having an enormous range of practical knowledge—about oneself, about others, about possible physical and social environments, and about dealing with other agents of all sorts in all sorts of environments.

Ideal stoic agents must also have the skill and toughness it takes to cope successfully with immature, ignorant, and pathological agents as well as healthy ones, or other ideal ones. Coping means being able to thrive, or at any rate being able to survive with one's agency intact, at the theoretical limits of human possibility: in extremities of abuse, neglect, malevolence, and competition from others; fear, loss, sudden reduction or reversal of fortune; crushing duties and lack of opportunity; and at the other extreme, the corrosive effects of great wealth, good fortune, fame, adulation, and an overabundance of opportunity. (The emperor says, wistfully, in *Meditations* 5.17, that it ought to be possible for a sage to live happily even in a palace.)

N.B.: Tragedians are pinned by the thought that admirable people might bring down whole houses, not from some flaw in their characters but rather from the way their very perfection plays out in unlucky circumstances. It is a short step from this to the notion that the sort of virtuosic strength and competence we are describing might not be ideal—that some sorts of “fragility,” to use Martha Nussbaum's memorable metaphor, might be necessary to excellence of character.

We reject that notion and invite those who are attracted to it to consider this thought experiment: Imagine in some detail two cases: one in which a physically healthy person is vulnerable to a crippling disease, and another in which a healthy agent is vulnerable to a crippling breakdown in adversity. Now consider ways in which each of these healthy people could be made fit to withstand the bad fortune. Suppose, for example, that a vaccine were available to prevent the crippling disease, and strengthening certain behavioral dispositions would prevent the crippling breakdown, both without offsetting ill effects. Would we not recommend them? Would we recommend strengthening the immune system but not the agency? And if we could strengthen both to the point that they could withstand anything, without offsetting effects, is that not preferable to their being vulnerable? (Is there some good reason for wanting people to be hurtable?)

Critics of stoicism think these are not rhetorical questions, at least not in the case of psychological health and agency, because they think the limiting case at the end of this strengthening process is a cold, dispassionate, calculating creature who is altogether incapable of profound love, commitment, and attachment. Thus even loose approximations of perfect strength have no appeal.

We think these critical arguments fail by ignoring one or more of three things. *First*, we should not expect immunization—physical or psychological—to be costless. Vaccines sometimes cause mild paralysis, but that is surely preferable to the severe kind; and modulated affect that cuts off extremely high frequencies of manic euphoria is a small price to pay for avoiding extreme depression. Pointing to the fact that stoic moral training has an emotional price is not sufficient for establishing that the cost offsets or outweighs the benefit. *Second*, we should remember that the immunity stoics recommend is dispositional. The emotional detachment or coldness it involves, for example, is triggered only by salient circumstances (for an airline pilot, flight emergencies). That does not mean that an agent who is psychologically equipped to be detached and unfeeling must always be so. *Third*, stoics have always recommended a life filled with “good” feeling and passion. The fact that ancient preoccupations with self-sufficiency caused some of us to describe the sage in a way that is repugnant to many modern readers does not invalidate our project. The sage we imagine now is made of strong stuff, to be sure, but it is not inflexible, impermeable, or especially hard.

Sages have stable character traits, which dispositionalize all the elements constructed by healthy agency (rationality, reciprocity, benevolence, commitments, affects, attachments, emotions, and so forth), as well as the normative principles or rules logically constructed from them. Given the range of possibilities generated by life in a social and physical environment filled with uncertainties, those dispositions must be enormously complex, subtle, and responsive to unanticipated events. Sages will thus be persistently benevolent but also reciprocal, cooperative but committed to their own agendas, principled but not rigoristic.

There is no developmental story we can tell, however, that eliminates the possibility of radical differences among people who equally approximate the ideal. Some may have world-historical ambitions, others not; some may be quickly moved to tears, others never; some may be theoretically inclined and contemplative, others relentlessly practical; some may be artists of the first rank, others merely dilettantes, ascetics and bon vivants, jocks and aesthetes, philosophers and lens grinders (or both).

Social life within a community of ideal stoic agents, while we suppose it would be free of violence and deceit, would not be free of persistent conflict. Such virtuosos would coordinate their endeavors, but we can find no plausible developmental story in which this coordination would necessarily be more than a stable, peaceful *modus vivendi* for people with fundamentally different ways of life.

N.B.: For millennia, pictures of sages have typically been pictures of men—men suspiciously similar to the ones with the drawing pencils. This would be amusing except for the fact that aristocrats, racists, ethnic or

religious zealots, and misogynists have consistently used such pictures to obscure and distort facts about the distribution of human endowments. We think modern science has decisively clarified most of these matters with respect to the potential for healthy, fit, and virtuosic agency. There is no longer any reason to believe that the array of endowments necessary to launch development into a close approximation of virtuoso agency is limited to members of a particular sex, race, or ethnic, religious, or social group. It is not practically possible for anyone we know ever to achieve more than a close approximation. But for the thought experiment, the appropriate picture of the ideal agent is a separate issue, and we are obliged to mention (with some pleasure in the sudden reversal of the model) that the only interesting question along these lines that appears to remain open is whether the picture of the sage must necessarily be the picture of a woman. We think not, but the considerations that keep the question open are the following.

As we said, sagehood is a developmental achievement that requires learning to cope successfully with the widest array of endeavors that are practically possible for humans. This requires learning from direct experience everything necessary for the appropriate generalizations and imaginative experience. The open issue is simply whether the significant physiological changes, opportunities, risks, and experience that are unique to women during their reproductive years are both imaginatively inaccessible to men and importantly connected to virtuosic agency. If so, and if men do not have important, uniquely male experience that is imaginatively inaccessible to women, then our picture of the sage should be the picture of a woman.

The reason we put the issue in this way, rather than asking whether there must be separate ideals for men and women, is that only the reproductive differences between the sexes seem to us to be candidates for complicating the notion of ideal agency in this way, and it seems implausible that anything about the male role in it would be both imaginatively inaccessible to women and crucial to ideal agency. It seems clear enough, for example, that many statistical physiological differences between the sexes (e.g., in height, weight, upper-body strength, hormone levels) are not relevant here, since such differences do nothing to prevent members of either sex from becoming virtuoso agents in coping with passion, aggression, violence, deep attachments, tests of strength or endurance, and so forth. And it is equally clear that neither the reason, objectivity, or public, military, and athletic virtues cited by misogynists nor the intuition, feeling, connectivity, or collaborative virtues cited by misandrists are relevant here. Whatever the statistical distributions of these traits may be, they do not remotely raise the possibility that ideal agency is theoretically inaccessible to members of one sex. Relevant social learning,

moreover, seems equally accessible in theory (though social structures that segregate people create differences in practice). It is true that some accounts of early childhood psychodynamics (e.g., those in the Freudian tradition) suggest that men and women have profoundly different sexual experience that is mutually inaccessible, but we are not aware of any evidence that such differences are importantly connected to the perfection of agency as we define it. Brain imaging studies that show sex-linked differences in the distribution of neural activity likewise fail to show a plausible connection to virtuosic agency.

But is there such a connection in the case of motherhood? Perhaps. If, as even many misogynists suppose, the healthy mother's bond with her child is especially powerful and complex, and if such experience gives mothers the opportunity to perfect their agency in ways inaccessible to men (for example, in making and sustaining complex intimate relationships), then there is such a connection. We do not believe the case for it has yet been made, however, and so we will keep our picture of the sage androgynous.

From Ideal Stoic Agency to Stoic Virtue

Ideal stoic agents will clearly have many of the traits that are standardly called virtues. They will act in a principled way toward others, treating similar cases similarly by criteria of fittingness and proportionality. That fits an ordinary description of a narrow sense of justice and is a trait that healthy agents will construct (and ideal ones will perfect) from primal reciprocal responses, generalization, and rationality. They will exhibit justice in a wider sense of the term as well, for they will construct cooperative dispositions from the persistent need to integrate and optimize endeavors that arise from both their primal benevolence and their narrow self-interest, and to solutions to distributive questions that are rational and stable in a given social environment with a given set of resources.

Wisdom in two senses is also included in the notion of ideal agency. Such agency is the practical ability to optimize the success of one's endeavors, and means having wisdom in the narrow sense of practical intelligence (*phronesis*), along with the knowledge necessary for effective deliberation and choice. But the move from healthy to fit agency, and then to the limit of versatility for it, inevitably means that ideal agents will frame their deliberations in terms of what is best for their whole lives. That frame of reference, together with the enormous breadth and depth of knowledge required to make practical intelligence effective in it, surely qualifies as wisdom in a broad sense (*sophia*). Practical intelligence informed and guided by historical and theoretical wisdom eventually

become joined, we may think, into something better called practical wisdom. It is that kind of wisdom that characterizes ideal agency. Courage, endurance, and perseverance are also parts of fit agency, as we mentioned earlier. And temperance or moderation (*sophrosyne*) will be evident in the modulation of passion, affect, emotion, attachments, and purposes necessary to integrate one's endeavors (personally and socially) in terms of an optimal whole life. The identification of these traits as virtues, and their opposites as vices, does not require a particular ethical theory. Every philosophically plausible account of virtue ethics identifies them as such. Theology will add to the list, but not often subtract from it.

Justice, temperance, courage, and wisdom are the traditional cardinal virtues (along with piety, perhaps), and it is not hard to see in equally general terms how versions of many other familiar virtues would be constructed in the move from fit to ideal agency. Compassion, generosity, conviviality, civility, conscientiousness, honesty, fidelity, and others are all in some form or other inevitable outgrowths of the move from healthy to fit to ideal agency—at least when that development occurs in reasonably hospitable physical and social environments.

How uniform such traits must be in ideal *stoic* agents is a difficult question, and one better left for another time—except to call attention to the picture of practical wisdom dealing with a huge set of competing dispositions all jostling for priority and expression in thought, emotion, and conduct. Some of these dispositions are virtues. Others are vices. Still others are purely instrumental or thoroughly idle pastimes. All of them carry their own motivations. Practical wisdom must prioritize the virtues and give timely expression to them in thought, emotion, and conduct. It must thoroughly subordinate the vices to the virtues, then restrict expressions of the vices to harmless ones consistent with making progress toward virtue. (The leading questions here, left to a later time, seem to concern justice. It will be interesting to see whether the most plausible ideal of justice that we can construct with a stoic agenda resembles any one of the competing contemporary theories more than another. It is not immediately clear whether it will be closest to Hume's, Kant's, Mill's, Rawls's, or some other modern theory, though it is clear enough that it will converge, as they all do, on a great many elements of the common-sense conception of justice. For some thoughts on this, see Becker 2012.)

Virtue, ideal agency, and eudaimonia. As noted at the outset of this chapter, virtue, ideal agency, and eudaimonia (happiness) are tightly linked in stoicism. Ideal stoic agency is necessary and sufficient for achieving and sustaining the stoic version of virtue. Virtue is necessary and sufficient for achieving and sustaining the stoic version of eudaimonia. Eudaimonia is traditionally assigned the role of being the final end in all this, though it is not, in technical stoic parlance, an ultimate good. Virtue is the *only* such

good. Everything else is a preferred, or dispreferred, indifferent. Here are some additional observations drawn from the developmental story.

Happiness considered in isolation from virtue and agency, and simply as an affective mental state—pleasure, contentment, pleasant excitement, euphoria, ecstasy, a richly varied succession of such states, or whatever—is clearly not the end for the sake of which healthy agents do everything else that they do. It is not their final end. This is clear because achieving a given affective state is only one of the many powerful and persistent aims of healthy primal agency, and one that even young children regularly sacrifice (not merely postpone) in order to pursue other things.

For an ideal agent, the appropriate exercise of healthy agency proper is her most comprehensive and controlling endeavor. That is, her controlling aim in every circumstance is to “get it right”—where that means ordering and defining the norms of whatever “it” she faces with respect to all her endeavors, so as to achieve optimal integration and success over a whole life replete with projects and beset by difficulties. Moreover, she will have come to value “getting it right” for its own sake, and not just for its instrumental value, and because it is her most comprehensive and controlling aim, it will have a comparable (comparative) value for her. It will be supremely valuable, for its own sake. Thus for an ideal agent any other given aim or endeavor (other than acting appropriately; getting it right) will be a subordinate one. The virtuosic exercise of agency—that is to say, virtue itself—will be her ultimate good, not because every (or even any) other endeavor is aimed at achieving it, but because every other endeavor is intentionally pursued only in ways that are compatible with achieving virtue. Virtue is the only ultimate good.

The developmental account of all this clearly suggests, however, that it is wise to pursue virtue because it, and only it, will yield a good life. Virtue is both necessary and sufficient for that; certainly for the stoic version of eudaimonia.

The unity of stoic virtue. Insofar as virtue is the product of ideal stoic agency, it is by definition unified in two senses. It is a unity in the sense that it is a single comprehensive and controlling endeavor. Moreover that single endeavor is unified, in the sense that all the endeavors it governs are perfectly integrated in the activities that issue from its exercise. The separately named virtues (justice, wisdom, courage, temperance, and so forth) are dispositions that are likewise coordinated in ideal agency; and conflicts that are generated by them are resolved in deliberation and choice.

Note that our picture of perfected agency is not monochromatic. We do not imagine, as perhaps Chrysippus did, that the sage’s very motivations are harmonized, with the result that desire and passion are unified with reason and will, thus producing tranquility by removing conflicts at their roots. Rather we follow Posidonius in supposing that conflict

remains constitutive of healthy, mature agency, and that the function of agency proper is to cope with it, not necessarily to root it out. The tranquility produced by ideal agency, then, is prospectively the serenity generated by confidence in one's ability to cope, and retrospectively the lack of regret that comes from making the shot perfectly, even if the arrow has missed the target.

Mutually entailing virtues. It is also a (trivial) consequence of our views here that the separately named virtues are unified, in virtue proper, in yet another sense that interested the ancients—namely, that the existence of any one of them implies the existence of all the others. Courage, ideally speaking, is just that version of the ability to act despite fear that ideal agents possess. That means it is the version produced by integrating all the traits constructed by ideal agency—including all the separately named virtues it constructs—into a coherent set of traits that realizes our final end. So to have one of these traits ideally integrated with the others will necessarily be to have all of them, similarly integrated, with it. The reason that this trivial result may nonetheless be provocative has to do with the temptation to think that somehow having an incomplete or underdeveloped inventory of “virtuous” traits can make an agent worse, not better. (Stalin's ability to act despite fear, for example, enabled him to perpetrate atrocities on a massive scale, and this makes some people reluctant to call it a virtue in that case.)

Moral Education and Divergent Paths to Virtue

In stoicism, the developmental account of virtue runs through a continuation of this path through health, healthy agency, and moral agency. That path runs through various levels of fit and virtuosic agency to specifically stoic moral agency as it makes progress toward ideal stoic agency, then to stoic virtue, and finally to stoic eudaimonia. We will return to that sequence after three brief remarks.

First, it is important to notice the obvious—that there are competing accounts of virtue, and thus (probably) of the sort of moral agency that supports each. It is plausible to think that most or all of the developmental processes described so far could be accurate for everyone with healthy agency—stoics and nonstoics alike. If so, all the competing accounts of virtue ethics could endorse it, at least to the extent that they would not want to endorse *un*healthy agency at any stage, even though at some stage they want to advocate a sharp turn toward their own version of agency and virtue, especially in the account of things that are good. That will require some special attention to moral education for stoics and nonstoics alike.

Second, stoics themselves, of course, have always been keenly aware of the fact that the natural motivation in the developmental process begins to get progressively weaker—especially as we move from fitness to virtuosity and beyond. Moreover, they have always wanted to introduce moral education to shore up that motivation and keep students on the path to stoic virtue. The same is no doubt true for Epicureans, Aristotelians, and other philosophical and theological advocates of virtue ethics. And everyone may want to intervene early on to strengthen the nascent virtues, weaken the nascent vices, and insert more enthusiasm into the whole process. So that is duly noted. Some consequences of the ethical theory here for stoic moral education may be found in the postscript.

Third and finally, we are here describing the natural process of development toward specifically stoic moral agency, virtue, and eudaimonia. This is not a comparative study of alternatives to it. It is enough for us to show that the usual criticisms of stoicism fail, and then to show how stoic moral agency is necessary and sufficient for stoic virtue (with appropriate forms of stoic moral education), and how the resulting stoic virtue is necessary and sufficient for stoic eudaimonia. So we return to that task.

The Argument for Virtue as the Product of Ideal Agency

In recent years some critics have charged that stoics have at most a *description* of how we might come to have certain moral motivations, and that what we lack is a moral *argument* for virtue. We think there is an argument clearly implicit in the developmental account just given, but it may be worthwhile to lay out that argument's structure in a compact and explicit way here. We will carry it most of the way through in the first person, to make clear that this is an argument that particular agents (of a certain sort) make from the inside, so to speak. But it is a reasoned argument whose premises and conclusions can be universalized for the domain of such agents.

1. I have many endeavors—many things I want to do—and each of those endeavors warrants normative propositions about what I ought (or am required) to do or be, nothing-else-considered. While it is logically possible for an agent of some sort (a shark beyond his reproductive years, perhaps) to have one and only one aim, I am not that sort of agent. There are always many things I ought to do and be.

2. One of my endeavors is practical reasoning *nothing-else-considered*—practical reasoning devoted solely to the task of implementing any occurrent endeavor I might have—including itself. Its norms for the pursuit of any endeavor it assesses typically dominate the norms arising immediately from the

assessed endeavor itself—by identifying the best means to that project's end, by sequencing and correcting activity in pursuit of it, and so on. So the norms of practical reasoning nothing-else-considered typically warrant superordinate requirements or oughts about projects it assesses. While it is logically possible for an agent of some sort (a very impulsive one, perhaps) to have no such endeavor of practical reasoning—or at least none whose norms dominate those of its targets—I am not that sort of agent. What I ought to do to pursue a given endeavor (when I have time to deliberate about it) is to follow my normative practical reasoning about it.

3. My normative practical reasoning about my endeavors, done serially, routinely generates a welter of conflicting requirements and oughts. That is, even though some of my endeavors are vertically or horizontally integrated from the beginning and thus raise no conflicts, many are mutually incompatible with some range of my other endeavors and will remain so unless I sequence or otherwise modify some of my pursuits. While it is logically possible for an agent of some sort (a god or a devil, perhaps) to have a completely integrated set of aims, I am not that sort of agent.

4. However, none of my endeavors, considered separately, routinely claims all the resources available for the exercise of my agency—even for a single day. That is, none of my endeavors typically warrants requirements or oughts whose satisfaction demands all of my time, energy, attention, opportunity, or ability over an extended period of time. While it is logically possible for some sort of agent to have a project that is, nothing-else-considered, tyrannical and all-consuming (“pray without ceasing,” perhaps), I am not that sort of agent. Each of my endeavors claims only a fraction of my resources and is indifferent to the rest.

5. Thus even the sequential application of practical reasoning nothing-else-considered to a long, arbitrarily selected series of target endeavors will routinely face local optimization problems—conflicts between two endeavors that can be solved by integrating them so that both of them can be pursued successfully. And a norm to the effect that more (success) is better than less is built into my endeavor of practical reasoning. While it is logically possible for an agent of some sort (someone with a comprehensive will to fail, perhaps) to operate briefly with a version of practical reasoning that does not have such an optimization norm, I am not that sort of agent. What I am required to do, as a necessary condition of exercising my agency, is to (try to) optimize the success of multiple endeavors.

6. The indefinitely repeated, stepwise solution of local optimization problems eventually results in global optimization, but as I reflect on this process in the course of integrating any two projects, I see that I may fail in my local endeavor if I do not *now* consider matters globally. This is so because the local sacrifices I might be prepared to make now, *nothing*-else-considered, might not be necessary or effective given conflicts with endeavors of mine that are not yet

under consideration. So it is clear just in terms of a reflective application of the optimization norm of practical reasoning to local problems that the norm itself warrants a requirement to widen the range of considerations to everything that might be relevant to the local problem. That is to say: on reflection, the norms of practical reasoning nothing-else-considered soon warrant the proposition that I am required, as a necessary condition of exercising my agency, to do my practical reasoning *all-things-considered*. While it is logically possible for an agent of some sort (an extremely manic one, perhaps) to lack this sort of reflectiveness, I am not that sort of agent.

7. When I reason all-things-considered, however, I am no longer engaging in an endeavor whose aim is local optimization. Rather, every endeavor that I consider (because it defines an aim for me; is normative for me) becomes a target for the optimizing work of practical reasoning. The norms of practical reasoning all-things-considered warrant the proposition that I ought to optimize over the full range of my occurrent endeavors. And persistent reflection on the danger of paying attention only to my occurrent projects eventually forces me to (try to) consider all the sorts of projects I might plausibly pursue over the various courses my whole life might take. This is the sort of deliberation I am required to do. While it is logically possible for an agent of some sort (a very impatient one, perhaps) to lack the sort of reflectiveness that warrants that normative proposition, I am not that sort of agent. What I am required to do, as a necessary condition of exercising my agency, is to aim, through my practical reasoning, at the global optimization of my projects current and future.

8. Further reflection reveals that *even* if my most comprehensive and controlling endeavor is *solely* to perfect the exercise of my agency based on the sort of practical reasoning I ought to do, and if I succeed in *that* endeavor, then I will by definition succeed in optimizing the success of all my endeavors—over my whole life. Moreover, reflection reveals that if I have any *other* ultimate aim, practical reasoning in aid of *it* will by definition *not* be directed at global optimization, and I will not be doing the sort of reasoning I am required to do. Thus the norms of this extended sort of practical reasoning warrant the proposition that I am required, as a necessary condition of exercising my agency, to take solely the perfection of (the exercise of) my agency based on practical reasoning all-things-considered as my most comprehensive and controlling endeavor. While it is possible for an agent of some sort (a follower of the dreadful Epicurus, perhaps) to lack the sort of extended reflectiveness that warrants that normative proposition, I am not that sort of agent.

9. Any normative proposition that is sound in my case is sound also for anyone who is relevantly similar to me. Thus all those whose agency is similar to mine, in the respects described in steps 1–8 above, are required to make the perfection of their agency their most comprehensive and controlling aim.

10. As noted in the account of the development of virtue, healthy agents will acquire strong norms corresponding to the usual notions of wisdom, justice,

benevolence, beneficence, courage, temperance, and other traits that are standardly called virtues. Indeed, developing such traits is a necessary condition for developing one's agency from health to fitness to virtuosity. Those norms warrant corresponding normative propositions for each such agent and can be universalized in that domain. Thus the proposition that all such agents are required to make the perfection of their agency their most comprehensive and controlling aim, is a fortiori the proposition that they are required to develop the traits necessary to pursue that endeavor, some of which traits are commonly called virtues.

11. Finally, since any normative proposition warranted by the endeavor to perfect our agency is ultimately traceable to a requirement that we make this our most comprehensive and controlling endeavor, it will dominate any conflicting requirement from any other endeavor.

Readers interested in a more formal representation of this argument are cordially invited to plug it into the calculus outlined in the appendix. Hint: in the calculus, the rules for transcendent assessment generate requirements (rather than oughts) in steps 5–9, and those requirements together with the axioms of encompassment and finality secure step 11.

Agency, not rationality. It is important to keep in mind, however, that this argument is sound only for agents of the sort described in our developmental story, and that it is a mistake to characterize them solely in terms of rationality. Pure practical reason, shorn of the rest of the psychology of healthy human agency, does not yield the normative propositions described in steps 1–11 (at least, we cannot see how it could). Rather, the argument outlined here depends crucially, at every step, on the normative content found in the multiple, less than fully integrated endeavors of healthy agents, and on the operation of *oikeiōsis* in their psychological development. Rational agents with a significantly different psychology (for example, rational agents who are primarily pleasure seekers, or who have only a very limited and thoroughly integrated repertoire of endeavors) fall outside the scope of this argument. It is clear that the operation of practical reason in some of those radically different psychologies would not lead to step 9 above and would not yield the normative proposition that the agents acquire the traits commonly called virtues. This is a fact about the requirements and oughts those agents can soundly construct (about what they and we should do or be) from the resources of their psychology and then universalize in the domain of agents like themselves. Their requirements and oughts, however, are no more than that: theirs, not ours.

Dealing with different sorts of agents. There is a very wide range of character types among healthy human agents. Should we try to make them more alike? Certainly, if that means acting on the universalized

normative propositions of steps 1–11. All such agents are required to seek to perfect their agency—to be virtuous. And just as we ought to develop an independent interest in the welfare of others, and are required to develop virtues of beneficence and justice, we ought to help other healthy human agents (as well as ourselves) to become virtuous. A serious commitment to do that, together with the opportunity to do so, would have enormous social consequences, especially in endeavors to ensure the development of healthy agency in human infants, children, and other immature agents. But nothing in 1–11 warrants the proposition that we should strive for a harmonious kingdom of ends all the way to the ground, on matters indifferent to virtue.

That leaves the question of requirements and oughts about agents whose psychology is radically different from our own. Should we simply deal with them strategically, in the pursuit of our own welfare? Ought we to help them pursue their own ends? Or should we try to make them more like healthy human agents? Here the argument sketched in 1–11 is largely silent. But it is clear that the answers to such questions will turn on particular cases, and on at least three matters about them. (a) One matter obviously has to do with the other agent's own welfare. Many nonhuman animals are agents in their own ways. Domestication often appears to run counter to profound and persistent needs or endeavors of some of them, and when it does, the stoic doctrine of following the facts would argue against it. The same is true for humans and turning them into stoics. (b) Another relevant matter, however, has to do with consequences for the development of our own agency. Even if velociraptors genuinely, profoundly want to become better practical reasoners, it is not clear *we* should want that unless at the same time they develop strong vegetarian norms. (c) And finally, there is the matter of possibility. Teaching a stone to talk, as someone once remarked, is slow work. For stoics, it runs afoul of the Axiom of Futility.²

Exalted Virtue

For those who like their ethical doctrines hard as nails, here is one to consider: virtue is the only good, and it is an all-or-nothing affair. No one who falls short of being a sage has any trait that can be called good at all, nor can one such person be any better or more virtuous than another. There are sages, and then there are the rest of us. Sages are equally virtuous; the rest of us (serial killers and mild-mannered reporters, mass

² “When a man who has been trapped in an argument hardens to stone, how shall one any longer deal with him by argument?” Epictetus, *Discourses*, 1.v.2.

murderers and their innocent victims) are all equally vicious. You can drown, as the writers of the Early and Middle Stoa were fond of saying, face down on the calm surface of the sea as surely as at the bottom. (Yes, but you can more easily be rescued at the surface.) We follow later colleagues in thinking these doctrines are untenable. But the concerns that underlie them are worthy of attention.

Virtue as All-or-Nothing

Try this. The coping mechanism used by agency proper is practical intelligence, operating sometimes at the level of conscious deliberation and choice, sometimes subliminally, but always in terms of inferences. Inferences are either valid or not; this property is not a matter of degree. Neither is soundness. One false proposition in an argument makes the inference unsound, period. Below the level of ideal agency, invalid or otherwise unsound inferences may have merely local effects. Imperfect agency may be incompletely integrated, for example, and less than comprehensively controlling. If so, and if we do not exercise agency properly or at all in some areas, then we may not notice conflicts between our endeavors, or attempt to generalize from one to another.

This has obvious disadvantages for learning, of course, but it also has the peculiar advantage that the effects of our errors are limited simply because we fail to apply those errors widely. Thus, short of achieving perfection itself, the closer we get to ideal agency with respect to integrating all our endeavors and controlling them all with practical intelligence, the more likely it is that errors in anything we do will invalidate everything we do. (Recall that perfect agency is perfectly unified.) Thus in one sense, as we “advance” from health through fitness toward ideal agency, we get no “better” at all, because the benefits we reap by developing our agency are offset by the increasing damage its remaining imperfections can do.

So only ideal agency (virtue) will do. Short of that, we are all equal, equally wretched, equally subject to drowning in our circumstances, but from different causes. For some of us, the cause is weak agency; for others, the cause is strong but defective agency. We prefer strong to weak, then, not because one is better than the other, but because it gets us closer to the only thing that is good—virtue. (It does not follow from this that we must treat mass murderers the same way we treat pillars of the community. Quite the reverse follows.)

There is something in that argument that we should face squarely, even though we may think its rhetoric is indefensible. The advantages of agency that we are motivated to pursue, as we move from mere health to fitness and beyond, are not guaranteed to us, *to any degree*, until we

achieve ideal agency and the virtue together with eudaimonia that it produces. Until then, no matter how far from the seabed we have come, depending on our luck we may have just as much difficulty breathing as when we began. Partial virtue does not necessarily make life easier, or more tranquil. In that sense, virtue is an all-or-nothing affair; not a matter of degree.

Progress toward Virtue as a Matter of Degree

Here is a better line of argument. For most of us, ideal stoic agency does not seem to be a practical possibility. If it is not, then in the logic of stoic ethics, we are required not to pursue it directly at all, but only at most to pursue endeavors to make it possible. At most, that weakens the way in which virtue is motivated for us. If the ideal is very far out of reach, and indirect efforts to bring it closer are also beset with difficulties, we may lose motivation for it altogether. But that ignores the fact that healthy stoic agency itself is robust, if not quite irrepressible. The traits we construct by exercising it, under a very wide range of circumstances, can be enough to keep us persistently attracted to its improvement, both in ourselves and in others. Furthermore, why should we think that the progress we make toward stoic agency and stoic virtue does not yield significant progress toward a good life as well? Chapter 7 will argue that it does yield a significant form of stoic eudaimonia. In very favorable circumstances, perhaps the leisure for philosophical reflection together with stoic moral training can do the rest. In the meantime, the whole dispute can reasonably be put aside.

The Value of Virtue

So far, this is not a very satisfying approach to accounting for the exalted status virtue has in stoic ethical theory—a status that has persistently tempted us to say that it is the *only* thing that is good and then immediately have to add a paragraph about preferred and dispreferred indifferents. We will perhaps be able to make this temptation intelligible if we consider the possibility that virtue might be uniquely, unconditionally, and incommensurably a good.

Virtue as uniquely and unconditionally a good. For a healthy agent, no matter what her circumstances, virtue as a set of dispositional powers is unconditionally a good, right up to the moment of death. We can think of no circumstances in which a mature, healthy agent could plausibly hold that the ability to act appropriately, as understood here, is a bad or

indifferent thing, all things considered. And this is not the formal, tautological claim that what is appropriate and good is appropriate and good. Acting appropriately, as understood here, is a special kind of optimization project—one that it is logically possible to reject. (And which many people with compulsive, obsessive, or addictive personalities do in fact reject.) Our claim is only that healthy agents, at least those well along the road to fitness in their deliberative powers, cannot plausibly reject it.

What could be a counterexample? Reckless love? Selfless courage? Kantian respect for the moral law? Any deliberative defense of these things, from a healthy agent, is surely going to turn on the claim that, properly considered, those things just *are* instances of an agent's acting appropriately in terms of her own projects. There are thus no implicit conditions attached to the value of virtue in this sense. It is a good in sickness and in health, war and peace, poverty or plenty, hate or love. It is a good independently of how things turn out (recall the archer). It is a good independently of others' attitudes, actions, virtues, and vices.

Moreover, virtue appears to be unique in this regard. Everything else (pleasure, for example) is only conditionally good. Apparent counterexamples turn out to depend implicitly on the circumstances; usually on the virtue of others. Consider benevolence, kindness, friendship, love. Can those ever be bad or indifferent things? Surely not, we want to say. But in doing so we also want to exclude busybody benevolence, fussy friends, smothering love, and so on from what we are endorsing. In excluding them, we sometimes directly acknowledge the conditional nature of the goods involved. We say, in effect, that loving concern from others is good *if* it does not include x, y, or z. At other times, however, the exclusions may be wrapped up in the very concepts involved—as when we claim, perhaps, that “true” friendship, “proper” care, and so forth exclude all the objectionable possibilities and thus by definition are unconditional goods. But then it is clear that we have simply hidden a condition of appropriateness (in the form of virtue in the friend or lover) in the concepts. What is it, after all, that makes having the friendship of a sage seem to be an unconditional good, when having the “friendship” of a fool or a knave is so clearly a conditional one? The difference lies in the fact that the friendly sage always acts appropriately. The good of her friendship thus turns out to depend on her virtue. And virtue alone is unconditionally a good.

Virtue as an incommensurable good. The development of agency from its primal stage to its maturity requires many goods—food, shelter, the care of others. But what happens in the course of such development, for healthy primal agents in even minimally favorable circumstances, is that they develop a superordinate affection for virtue—for the exercise of the sort of agency that optimally coordinates, integrates, and implements

their endeavors. The exercise of that kind of agency becomes their most comprehensive and controlling endeavor. And the value that the exercise of such agency (virtue) then has for them is independent of the value of any other, ordinary good that they may or may not have. Virtue is no less (or more) valuable in reduced circumstances than in plenty, no more (or less) valuable for the genius than for the mediocre intellect. Its value is constant. And more to the point here, once virtue becomes our most comprehensive and controlling endeavor, its value for us will be incomparable with that of other things in the sense that nothing will be an adequate substitute for virtue; no other good or combination of goods will “add up” to its good, or be something that could conceivably compensate for its loss. Virtue will then be off the balance scales of value for us. It will be of incomparable value.

The dignity of virtue. In many ancient Greek texts, not just stoic ones, there is the contention that reason (or rational agency) distinguishes human beings from other mortal forms of life and somehow elevates us above them—makes us superior to them. It is clear enough, in terms of the developmental story we have given, how a virtuoso agent inevitably comes to believe that her own worth as a human being is ultimately determined *only* by the quality of her agency—and is not determined to any extent whatsoever by wealth, fame, good fortune, or any good other than the good of virtue. And it is clear how such an agent would, by generalizing, inevitably come to believe the same thing about other human beings. It is not clear at all, however, how further claims about the superiority of rational beings per se could logically be inferred from this.³ Nor is it clear how we can plausibly infer from it that rational agents possess a special sort of (godlike) dignity. Such matters are perhaps best left in the hands of theologians, rationalists, and romantics—or people who practice all three callings simultaneously.

Nonetheless, it is fair to recast some of the sage’s beliefs about human agency in rhetoric that is reminiscent of Kant. It is fair to say that stoic sages come to believe that the dignity and moral worth of healthy, mature

³ Arguments such as this seem to come out of thin air (or prior theological commitments):

What employs reason is better than what does not employ reason.
But nothing is better than the universe.
Therefore the universe employs reason.

Cicero attributed this to Zeno in *The Nature of the Gods*, 2.20. My thanks to Julia Annas for the reference and the translation. She adds helpfully, “It is most charitable to take this not to be a serious argument from premises which an opponent might be expected to share, but rather an encapsulation of Stoic doctrine, using premises which are already accepted.” See Annas, *The Morality of Happiness*, 161 and 161n. 9. But what imaginable grounds are there for accepting them?

human beings reside wholly in their virtue, and not in any other goods or good qualities they may possess. Wrenched out of the context of the developmental account of virtue outlined here, such rhetoric is misleading. In context, however, it seems a plausible way to summarize the exalted status that virtue should have in contemporary stoic ethics.

Commentary

Stoic moral agency, virtue, and eudaimonia as inseparable elements of stoic ethical theory. The first edition proposed that “virtue, and not happiness,” was the final end, but that virtue was identical with the perfection of agency, through which eudaimonia was achieved and sustained. That identity claim is as problematic as the ancient attempt by some Stoics to say that virtue is identical to eudaimonia. This problem in the first edition was pointed out to me in an extensive and elegant review essay (Inwood 1998) published late in the same year that the first edition appeared. Working on this second edition has given me the opportunity to do something about it.

The account now offered here has at least the following advantages. It retains the ancient insistence that virtue is the only good, and that it is sufficient for eudaimonia. It replaces problematic identity claims with the observation that stoic agency, virtue, and eudaimonia all have the same developmental path in stoicism and are inseparable in the sense that the perfection of agency is developmentally and causally necessary and sufficient for stoic virtue, which is in turn developmentally and causally necessary and sufficient for stoic eudaimonia. Eudaimonia is then proposed as the terminus of our efforts to achieve a good life—and that thesis is defended at greater length in chapter 7 and its commentary.

Daniel Russell, in his book *Happiness for Humans* (2012, 189), comes to something like this conclusion—without reference to the developmental story—by describing the way in which Stoics placed “joy, not *alongside* virtuous activity, but *within* it.”

How close is the “inseparability” account to the ancient sources? For the ancient doctrine on virtue as the final end, see Cicero, *De Finibus*, 3.v–vii, beginning at v.20. For the doctrine that virtue is the only good, and the notions of value and indifference, see Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, 7.101–5. For other sources, and some differences between them, consult Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, section 63 on the final end, and section 61 on virtue generally, including the unity issue; sections 58 and 60 on value and indifference. Note especially the commentary to section 63. The ancient Stoics were vigorously attacked on all these points for making silly or illogical arguments. I. G. Kidd, in “Stoic Intermediates and the End for Man,” and Gisela Striker, in “Antipater, or the Art of Living,” helpfully clear away some of the debris to reveal a logical way of understanding the traditional stoic “identification” of the final end with happiness, happiness with virtue, and virtue with an activity—a way that makes sense of their refusal to treat these assertions as either trivially or definitionally true.

Inwood, in “Goal and Target in Stoicism,” and Striker, in “Following Nature: A Study in Stoic Ethics,” section 3, helpfully explore the stoic notion that virtue is a special sort of craft—sometimes called a “stochastic” craft—like medicine or archery, in which the obvious aim of the enterprise must be distinguished from the issue of whether the craft is being practiced to perfection. In the case of medicine, the physician can have practiced his art perfectly even though he fails to restore the patient to health. Should he therefore have tried to practice imperfectly?

Surely not. There is thus a sense in which the physician's goal or aim must be different from—more complicated than—simply restoring the patient to health. The latter is the “target” in every instance of practicing medicine, and in the long run, success at hitting those targets determines what will count as safe and effective medicine, but the physician's *controlling goal* in each case is evidently as much to act appropriately *as a physician*—to practice the craft to its highest current standard—as it is to get a good result in that case. This is the point stoics want to make about perfecting the exercise of agency. The activity of acting appropriately is itself the controlling aim, even though it may not be the target. Just why this point about the complexity of stochastic crafts and virtue has generated so much dispute is hard to understand. Perhaps, as Striker argues, it is due to confusion about the variety of meanings that statements of the form “X is Y” can have. In any case, modern readers should find the point so familiar as to be humdrum. It is made constantly in arguments for the importance of form and process in a democratic polity, or the importance of zealous advocacy in an adversarial legal system. And failure to appreciate the stochastic complexity of crafts, arts, and professions is precisely the point at issue in complaints about managers, legislators, and administrators who see nothing but the bottom line about outcomes.

Striker, in “Following Nature: A Study in Stoic Ethics,” makes the point that when ancient Stoics spoke about eudaimonia, or the final end, they defined it as “something that everyone should or ought to pursue, rather than as an aim that everyone does in fact pursue.” This much is consistent with our view here as well, though we no longer endorse the idea that the “ought” comes from cosmic telos. For a powerful argument that the ancient Stoic account of these matters is thoroughly entangled with their view of a cosmic telos, see Long, “Stoic Eudaimonism.”

The Stoics and Kant. Is agency anything more than a means to an end? The task of agency is to implement our endeavors successfully. In that respect it appears to be a means to various ends—and perhaps the perfection of agency is *the* means to *the* optimal integration and realization of our ends. But that may seem to fall short of a warrant for thinking it is an end in itself at all, let alone for thinking it has the incomparable value the ancient Stoics assigned to virtue, and Kant assigned to the moral law. In particular, people who find some affinity between the Stoics and Kant on this point are likely to be dissatisfied with the rough handling this doctrine gets in the text of this chapter.

The Kantian interpretation of stoic doctrine is fascinating and is perhaps most striking on the subject of natural law and justice (see Annas, *The Morality of Happiness*, 304ff.). But we think it is dangerous. The danger comes from the fact that stoic ethical theory is a relentlessly naturalistic and particularistic one, and Kantian ethical theory is decidedly not. Doctrines that look alike in slogan form may look very different when each is fully explained. When stoics give an account of what can plausibly be regarded as the final end, we do it by giving an account of human psychological development. We give a cradle argument that shows how healthy agents just *do*, in the course of becoming fit, come to have an independent affection for acting appropriately—that is, for “getting it right,” where “it” is a universally quantified variable. This soon includes an affection for the *ability* to act appropriately—that is, for the perfected powers of agency itself.

And our account of the way in which sages come to identify the exercise of ideal agency powers with virtue, and to prize it above all else (indeed, beyond comparison with anything else), is also a developmental one, which is in outline quite mundane. Our *arguments* for pursuing virtue are arguments from the inside, as it were. They are the arguments healthy agents construct and have the motivation to act on, *given the nature of their agency*.

The difficulty (and we suppose the fascination for rationalists) is that reasoning about the nature and worth of virtue itself plays a central role in this developmental story. Reason itself leads agents to the conclusion that virtue is the sole good. If we are not thinking carefully, the abstract, formal properties of reason may appear to make ethical doctrines grounded in “pure” reason somehow independent of the existence and subjective states of particular agents, and thus truly “objective”—in contrast to the sort of theory we have presented here. But we reject the idea that *pure* practical reason is sufficient to lead us to stoic doctrines about virtue. We think that pure practical reason, operating in unhealthy agents, or in healthy agents in unfavorable circumstances, will often lead them very far away from our doctrines. And we reject the idea that our particularism—our insistence that all norms are facts about the endeavors of particular agents—makes our ethical theory “subjectivist.”

Troels Engberg-Pedersen, in “Stoic Philosophy and the Concept of Person,” is helpful on this point in contrasting ancient Stoic doctrine with recent discussions about subjective versus objective points of view, especially ones found in Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, and in Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*. He criticizes (in “Stoic Philosophy,” 124) the assumption that “if practical rationality remains *somebody’s*, then it will necessarily lose its rational and objective character.” He asks us to contrast that assumption with the stoic view in which practical rationality is consistently regarded as belonging to *somebody* and to somebody who has, and retains, an individual self throughout the development of the objective view. The objective view is a view *on oneself*, and this fact has a number of welcome consequences. One is that we can avoid the idea, which when taken literally is in fact absurd, of a “point of view of the universe.” Another is that there is now no difficulty in understanding how one should come to *act* on the insights gained in applying the objective view. Most importantly, there is no suggestion that the connection of the objective view to the individual makes it any less objective or rational.

Psychology. The argument in this chapter, as in chapter 5, takes a very conservative approach to the literature in psychology, relying fundamentally on well-regarded handbooks in developmental psychology that review the relevant scientific literature for the benefit of research psychologists, and on standard, long-run textbooks currently in use by academic psychologists, especially by those who describe their endeavor as scientific psychology.

For the second edition, new work in developmental aspects of neuropsychology, evolutionary psychology, and positive psychology was consulted in the two-volume *Oxford Handbook of Developmental Psychology* edited by Philip David Zelazo (2013), and in Oxford handbooks on positive psychology. For the purposes of the arguments for a new stoicism, this reinforces the evidence in works cited in the first edition. Something additional to watch is the developing

understanding in neuropsychology of so-called mirror neurons, which connect perception to action in both participants and observers of those participants. Their connection to human abilities (or lack of abilities) to empathize with others is tantalizing. James P. Chaplin and T. S. Krawiec's *Systems and Theories of Psychology*, 4th edition, is useful as well.

Nothing in the argument depends, as far as we know, on unreplicated or controverted studies, and none of the empirical premises is in dispute among the various competing approaches to studying psychological phenomena scientifically. Further, we have deliberately avoided taking positions in two areas of fundamental theoretical dispute among developmental psychologists. One dispute is about the range and extent of cognitive ability that is hardwired or preformed as opposed to acquired in adaptive interaction with one's environment. There is consensus that both sorts of processes are at work in every healthy human agent. But there is considerable difficulty in identifying which of the two regulates which specific developments (and to what degree some elements of adaptive development might be idiosyncratic or culture-bound). The other basic dispute we have avoided concerns (a) whether to proceed on the theory that human cognitive (and moral) development occurs in more or less discrete stages that necessarily occur in a certain order and which impose distinct schemas or frames on the data, or (b) whether it is better to think of cognitive development as a continuous and somewhat disorderly "acquisition of expertise" by the repeated, reflexive use of a fixed repertoire of frames, and information-processing routines, that are fitted with feedback functions.

Owen Flanagan's *Varieties of Moral Personality* is useful in checking our descriptive claims in several ways: for the detailed philosophical and scientific evaluation he provides of some controversial studies (e.g., Kohlberg's, Milgram's); for his evaluation of motivational principles employed by moral philosophers (e.g., Rawls's Aristotelian Principle); and for the wealth of entry points he provides into the literature of empirical psychology.

The psychology of the person, or self, is clearly one area to explore. For the early work, Gordon Allport is a sensible and rewarding guide, both in his classic book *Becoming: Basic Considerations for a Psychology of Personality* and in his systematic summation, *Pattern and Growth in Personality*. His useful essay "Traits Revisited" is in his *The Person in Psychology*, and for obvious reasons, any argument based on the concept of *oikeiōsis* will find Allport's concept of the "proprium" and "proprie striving" helpful. Some inadvertent similarity between our account of healthy agency and Carl Rogers's concept of a "normal, fully functioning person" may also be of interest. For a convenient summary statement of Rogers's view, see Chaplin and Krawiec's *Systems and Theories of Psychology*, 4th edition (552–56).

For an overview of cognitive development, blending sophisticated versions of Piagetian stage-theory and information-processing approaches, see John Flavell's *Cognitive Development*, 2d edition. His classic full-length exposition of Piaget is *The Developmental Psychology of Jean Piaget*. Since the development of representational and linguistic abilities figures prominently in our account of *oikeiōsis*, the literature on language acquisition is also relevant. See, for example, Roger Brown's *Social Psychology*. On inference—especially systematic divergence between "normative"

and “intuitive” inferential processes—see Kahneman and Tversky, eds., *Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases*, and Nisbett and Ross, *Human Inference: Strategies and Shortcomings of Social Judgment*. And for a sensible overview of matters concerning the integration and stability of character traits, see Flanagan’s *Varieties of Moral Personality*, chap. 13. We note with special interest this remark:

We tend to think that integration is achieved mostly through a top-down control mechanism. But a high degree of vertical coordination, without any overarching control mechanism, is also a possibility. Indeed it now seems most likely that consciousness notices and regulates a unity that emerges from other sources as much as it creates whatever unity exists in the first place. In any case there is a strong presumption—possibly greater than the facts will bear—that some sort of integration, coordination, unity or wholeness of being is both more or less inevitable and a necessary and sufficient condition for personhood. Minimal persons possess . . . personality. (276)

Flanagan argues that moral theories must be assessed in part by whether they satisfy the Principle of Minimal Psychological Realism: “Make sure, when constructing a moral theory or projecting a moral ideal that the character, decision processing, and behavior prescribed are possible, or perceived to be possible, for creatures like us” (32). Despite the formidably virtuosic character of the stoic sage (who is, after all, a kind of theoretical limit or convergence point at infinity), we believe stoic moral psychology satisfies Flanagan’s principle, especially in the way he unpacks its four requirements (54–55). (1) We certainly give a scientifically defensible “*general picture* of how, in rudimentary terms, persons are put together.” (2) We use that psychological picture to define “constraints on [our] conception” of moral personality, and “to give a picture of the motivational structure required for its realization and an argument for believing that this motivational structure is possible.” (3) We use psychology to assess the degree of difficulty in carrying out our moral program. And (4) we do not confuse or conflate “social or narrow” psychological traits (ones that are socially determined) and “natural” traits (ones that are biologically determined). The sticking point is clearly the ideal of the sage. Here we think it is sufficient, to meet the requirement of minimal psychological realism, to have shown that the motivational structure needed to *pursue* the ideal is practically possible, and that achieving the ideal is theoretically possible. In fact, we think our account is realistic in much stronger ways than that.

The analogy to health. The ancient Stoics were fond of medical analogies. Chrysippus reportedly wrote a book called *Emotional Therapy*, and it is not a quirk that Galen discusses stoic views extensively in a treatise, *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*. Here is an interesting passage about how to diagnose “inferior men” from book 5, section 2.

Chrysippus says that their soul is analogous to a body which is apt to fall into fever or diarrhoea or something else of that kind from a small and chance cause. Posidonius is critical of this comparison; he says that the soul of inferior persons should not be compared to these (bodies) but simply to healthy bodies.

For with respect to their experiencing the affection and being led to suffer it in any way whatever, it makes no difference whether the cause of their fever is large or small; the difference between them is that the one kind (of body) contracts the disease easily, while the other does so with difficulty. Thus Chrysippus erred, he says, in his comparison of health of soul to health of body, and disease (of soul) to a bodily state that easily falls into disease, for there is a soul—that of the wise man, obviously—that becomes immune to affection, whereas no body is immune to disease; it would be more correct to compare the souls of inferior persons “either to physical health with a proneness to disease”—that is Posidonius’ phrase—“or to the disease itself”; for there is a constitution that is either sickly or already laboring from a disease. But he himself agrees with Chrysippus to the extent of saying that all inferior men are diseased in soul and that their disease is comparable to the above-mentioned states of the body. His actual words are as follows: “Therefore the disease of the soul does not resemble, as Chrysippus had supposed, the sickly constitution of the body, whereby it is carried off in such a way as to fall into irregular, non-periodic, fevers; rather, disease of the soul resembles either physical health with a proneness to disease, or the disease itself. For disease of the body is a state already diseased, but what Chrysippus calls disease resembles rather a proneness to fever.”

Martha Nussbaum, in *The Therapy of Desire*, makes heavy use of the fact that the medical analogy figures prominently in stoic texts. For an illuminating discussion of the intersection of “Philosophy and Medicine in Antiquity,” see Frede, *Essays in Ancient Philosophy* (225–42). For an account of the extent to which virtue does and does not track psychological health as that notion is now employed in psychology, see Flanagan, *Varieties of Moral Personality*, chap. 15. Our discussion is consistent with what he says about health. He does not consider what we call fitness and virtuosity.

The practical importance of moral education. In the developmental story offered in this chapter the perennial practical importance of Epictetus, Seneca, and Marcus Aurelius is now appropriately acknowledged. See the section titled “Moral Education and Development toward Virtue.” Here again I am indebted to helpful remarks by a review essay on the first edition (Stephens 2000), together with the work of Tony Long on Epictetus, the work of all those currently involved in translating, editing, and commenting on the works of Seneca (Brad Inwood, Martha Nussbaum, Margaret Graver, and others), and the new work on the Roman Stoics generally. See the overview and bibliography in the reference works edited by Inwood (2003) and Sellars (2016). On a more practical side, the work of philosophers and psychologists on developing materials for the daily practice of stoicism should also be noted. The bibliography in this volume references some of this work by Christopher Gill, Donald Robertson, and Massimo Pigliucci.

Weak agency. It is clear from the discussion in the text that on our account, agency below the level of sagehood can be weak, and action *akratic*, in a variety of ways. But one way in which action cannot be akratic and still be agency (or action) proper is if passion simply “overwhelms” agency—renders it inoperative.

Justin Gosling, in “The Stoics and ‘Akrasia,’” (esp. 186–87), argues helpfully that ancient Stoics may have been making a similar point about akrasia, which their critics failed to see. He says:

Suppose we take the example, which was popular in the ancient disputes, of Medea torn between her desire for revenge against Jason, urging her to kill their children, and her judgment (of reason?) that that would be a wicked act. . . . Critics of Stoicism tended to interpret this example in Platonic terms of the (real) agent being overwhelmed by passion. The oddity of this way of talking is that it risks undermining the supposition that Medea acts intentionally.

But on the supposition that even the most passionate acts are intentional, thus involving the exercise of agency (or reason, as the ancients would say), then our account of akrasia must be an account of defective agency or reason, and it follows that perfected agency cannot be akratic.

Ordinary goods. The ancient Stoics held that there were two sorts of things that had worth but that only one of them (virtue) could be called good. Things of the other sort were “preferred indifferents.” The fragmentary nature of the texts on this point, its seeming oddity, the fact that other ancient philosophers attacked it so vigorously, and the impression we glean that the ancient Stoics ultimately yielded ground to their critics on the matter have combined to generate a persistent puzzle for scholars. The puzzle concerns not only how to make sense of the notion of the worth or value of a preferred indifferent but how to explain the connection, if any, between such ordinary goods and the exalted value of virtue. Nicholas White, in “Stoic Values,” lays out the problem carefully, and solves it elegantly, by distinguishing acts that are merely appropriate (in our lingo, submoral requirements or oughts) from acts that are “right” in the full sense. The solution anticipates some matters addressed in chapter 7, but here is White’s summary statement.

The crucial fact is that even when the sage and the ordinary person perform what is outwardly the very same act, they conceive of that act in quite different ways. To the ordinary person, the act will be seen as falling under a type, such as honoring one’s parents, for which there is a “reasonable defense.” These types include those that appear in the various precepts that we employ in ordinary deliberation and teaching. Thus for the ordinary person a particular action will seem justified *qua* falling under the concept or predicate, *honoring one’s parents*, or perhaps some wider predicate under which it is subsumed. For the sage, on the other hand, it will recommend itself in a rather different way. It will be seen primarily under the very general notion: *fitting into the whole structure of acts that it is appropriate for him (and others) to perform*. And it will be seen in this way only by the sage, because only the sage, according to the Stoics, is in a position to comprehend all of his actions within a systematic and coherent picture. . . .

But if this is so, then clearly the sage can have two simultaneous attitudes toward one and the same act. He approves of the act *qua* fitting into the pattern that he comprehends, which gives it its status as a “right act,” but he is indifferent toward it *qua* merely falling under the type, e.g., “honoring one’s

parents,” that gives it its status as a merely “appropriate act.” The Stoic claims about the end of life make it inevitable that the sage will have this dual attitude toward acts (and, *mutatis mutandis*, things that are preferred and dispreferred). The end, we saw, was “living in accord with nature.”

But so far we only have part of the answer to our problem. For to see that the same thing can be regarded both as indifferent and nevertheless also as preferable, under two different concepts, is still not to see the connection between these two concepts. As I have insisted, we must still ask why virtue involves the propensity to choose certain things even though they are indifferent. (50–53)

For the sage, that is, the perfectly virtuous person, the answer is straightforward. The sage’s appropriate acts are simultaneously right acts. For him the particular acts that have a reasonable defense are precisely the acts that are done with a full understanding of the correct pattern of acts into which they fit. So for him the propensity to perform particular appropriate acts is extensionally equivalent to the propensity to act from full understanding. But the sage’s reason for performing those acts is that they satisfy the latter condition, not that they satisfy the former. *Qua* conforming to nature, these acts are not indifferent at all. When chosen as such, they are “right acts,” not merely “appropriate acts,” and so there is no reason to wonder how it could be the human end, or rational, or virtuous, for the sage to perform them.

External goods and happiness: stoics versus Aristotle. Ancient critics of Stoicism sometimes took the line that what was true in Stoic ethics was not new, and that what was new was not true. Current critics are more generous. For example, most now grant that the notion of *oikeiōsis* and its role in moral development are important stoic contributions, not to be found in predecessors despite what some later Peripatetics claimed. But the issue that has drawn the most sustained attention, almost all of it unfavorable to stoics, and almost all of it couched in terms of a comparison to Aristotle, is the thesis that virtue is sufficient for happiness (or “identical” to it). In one sense, of course, Aristotle also identifies virtue with happiness (e.g., at 1098a.16–20 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*) when he says that the highest good for humans is the activity of the soul in accordance with virtue in a complete life. And as Annas, in *The Morality of Happiness* (369–70), says, for Aristotle,

There is . . . a sense in which virtue is the only aim of the virtuous person. She will go for health, money and so on in the normal course of things; but if she is fully virtuous, and virtue demands ignoring or losing these things, she will not only perform the virtuous action but she will be completely motivated to do it. She will note the losses, and may regret them for many reasons, but they do not so much as tempt her to reject the virtuous course. To be fully virtuous, from both the affective and the intellectual side, is to be someone who does what virtue requires just for that reason and not for any ulterior reason, without having to battle down counter-motivation. And to be this sort of person is to be a person who aims at the life of virtuous activity for its own sake.

Yet Aristotle famously insists that a life of virtuous activity cannot be “complete” (and thus be identical to happiness, our final end) without an adequate supply of

“external” goods such as wealth, power, and good luck (e.g., at 1101a.14–16 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*). And against that, stoics notoriously claim that virtue “is” happiness. In an admirable and instructive article, T. H. Irwin (“Stoic and Aristotelian Conceptions of Happiness,” 206) says that “The belief that virtue is identical to happiness separates [the Stoics] from Aristotle; and the recognition of valuable indifferents separates them from the Cynics.” He goes on to propose that the Stoics argued for a distinctive middle position by adopting Aristotle’s formal conditions for the highest good (roughly, that it be the ultimate end of all action, that it be complete, self-sufficient, and incapable of being increased by the addition of other goods), but then by rejecting Aristotle’s contention that virtue alone cannot meet those conditions. This the Stoics did by arguing that “Aristotle’s inference from his formal conditions is unwarranted; a complete good need not include external goods, and is fully achieved by virtue” (208).

Daniel Russell (2012, chaps. 5–8) has a careful and illuminating analysis of the ancient debate about the (in)sufficiency of virtue for happiness—as it runs from Socrates through Aristotle and the Stoics. He argues, on behalf of the Stoics, that they properly complicate the question of virtue as the only good by arguing that, given our nature as human beings, virtue makes some other bodily and external things (like health, and properly controlled emotion) good *for* virtuous activity. So to the extent that virtue just is a form of agentic activity, it will include the externals that are necessarily good for it, even though those things are not themselves good. After all, in other forms they are also good for vicious activity. He believes that the difference between Aristotle and the Stoics on sufficiency can be eliminated by making some obvious changes in the Aristotelian position.

Readers will have to judge for themselves how well we succeed here in preserving a different sort of distinctively stoic middle position. It is of course true that it is impossible to exercise agency at all when our stock of external goods falls below some minimum level—for example, deprivation of food, shelter, physical strength, and freedom from pain that is so severe that one cannot deliberate and act rationally at all. If that is all Aristotle meant by an adequate supply of them, then there is no difference between his position and a stoic one. We assume, however, that for him, an adequate supply meant a good deal more than this minimum.

Affect, emotion, passion: stoics versus stoics, and stoics versus Aristotle. In our view, Posidonius is the sage among the ancient Stoics on these topics. His views on emotion are known to us primarily through Galen’s report of them in *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*, 4–5. I. G. Kidd, in “Posidonius on Emotions,” and John Cooper, in “Posidonius on Emotions,” are of great help in drawing out the implications of this material, and in their hands it looks both different from Plato (to whom many have thought Posidonius was retreating by invoking a doctrine about the divisions of the soul) and strikingly modern. Brad Inwood, in “Seneca and Psychological Dualism,” carries the same sort of argument forward against claims that Seneca too was propounding a doctrine of a divided soul in which reason is pitted against passion.

No stoics ever held the view that the sage’s life should be empty of affect, emotion, and passion. Inwood, in *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism* (chap. 5), assembles a compelling case on this point even for the Early Stoa. The doctrine was not that we should be passionless (*apatheia*) but rather that “*apatheia*

is *eupatheia* . . . [where] *eupatheia* is simply the impulse of a fully rational man” (173). For more on these matters, see Margaret Graver’s *Stoicism and Emotion*.

A standardly cited Stoic text on the nature of the good passions is the curious one from Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, 7.116, quoted here in the translation by Long and Sedley, in *The Hellenistic Philosophers*:

(1) They [the Stoics] say that there are three good feelings: joy, watchfulness, wishing. (2) Joy, they say, is the opposite of pleasure, consisting in well-reasoned swelling [elation]; and watchfulness is the opposite of fear, consisting in well-reasoned shrinking. For the wise man will not be afraid at all, but he will be watchful. (3) They say that wishing is the opposite of appetite, consisting in well-reasoned stretching [desire]. (4) Just as certain passions fall under the primary ones, so too with the primary good feelings. Under wishing: kindness, generosity, warmth, affection. Under watchfulness: respect, cleanliness. Under joy: delight, sociability, cheerfulness. (412)

F. H. Sandbach, in *The Stoics* (59–68), while no better than anyone else at reducing the weirdness of that classification scheme, is nonetheless an effective antidote to the distortion of Stoic doctrine on *eupatheia* in general, emphasizing that the passions the Stoics were concerned to expunge were only those they regarded as excessive.

Michael Frede, in “The Stoic Doctrines of the Affections of the Soul,” makes the important point, however, that what the Stoics regarded as excessive must have been very different from what Platonists and Aristotelians so identified, else there would have been no dispute between them on this matter. (And there surely was such a dispute.) All hands rejected “excessive” affect, emotion, and passion; all insisted that well-modulated “good passions” remain in the sage. Frede’s argument is that the Stoic view is distinctive because it rejects the view that the “affections of the soul” come from some mental faculty other than reason, which reason must then subordinate and modulate. Rather, affections are certain manifestations of beliefs. In modern jargon: for the mature human agent, every attitude is a propositional attitude, in which the attitude supervenes on believing the proposition. (Things are different for animals and primal human agents.) Affects thus arise from our perceptual-intellectual apparatus and are excessive just in case the beliefs that generate them are false. Since virtue (the perfection of reason; here the perfection of agency) eliminates false beliefs, it thereby eliminates all the affect generated by false beliefs. And since we are typically very far from being sages in every aspect of our lives, it is reasonable to think that our affective life (no matter how well modulated and appropriate it is by Aristotelian standards) is very different from a sage’s. A sage’s life would lack most of the affects (well modulated or not) that ordinary people have, because most of their affects are traceable to false beliefs.

Notice, though, that Posidonius raises a caution about a straightforward acceptance of such a belief-to-desire account, quoted in Galen, *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato* (4.5.26ff.):

Posidonius answers this objection in the following way: “On this interpretation of Chrysippus’ words one might first raise the question how it is that wise

men, who hold that all honorable things are good to the highest degree and unsurpassed, are not moved affectively by them, desiring the things they seek and taking excessive delight in these same things whenever they obtain them. For if the magnitude of apparent goods or evils moves one to believe that it is proper and in accordance with one's estimate of them to be moved affectively when they are present or approaching and to accept no reasoning that says one should be moved by them in another way, then the persons who think that the good they enjoy is unsurpassed ought to have been thus affected; but we observe that this does not happen. There is a similar difficulty in the case of those who are making progress and who suppose that their vice brings them great harm: they ought to have been carried away by fear and to have fallen victim to immoderate distress, but this too does not happen." After this Posidonius writes as follows: "And if they should say that in addition to the magnitude of the apparent good or evil, weakness of soul is also to blame, and for that reason the wise are completely rid of the affections, but inferior men, when their weakness is not a weakness of the ordinary kind but one that has gone to extremes, are not, even so the problem is not resolved. For all agree that men fall into affections because of sickness of soul; but the question asked is how the soul has been moved and what motion it causes, and that question is not answered." His next words are: "But not only those who have a vice that has gone to extremes and who fall easily into affections, but all unwise men, so long as they have their vice, fall into affections both great and small." And he continues, "To suppose that a person has been moved in this way in accordance with his estimate of events, so that the rejection of reason indicates a great affection, is to suppose wrongly; for this happens also through a moderate and a small (affection)." After this Posidonius writes the following: "When two persons have the same weakness and receive a like impression of good or evil, one is moved affectively, the other not; and one (is moved) more, the other less. And sometimes the weaker (of two persons), who supposes that what has befallen him is greater, is not moved. And the same person is sometimes moved affectively, sometimes not, at the same things, and sometimes more, sometimes less. Thus those who are unused (to a thing) are more greatly affected in situations of fear, distress, desire and pleasure; and the more vicious are quickly seized by their affections."

Posidonius next presents quotations from the poets and historical accounts of ancient exploits which testify to his statements. And after that he adds: "So what is evil is quickly seized by an unaccustomed thing, but what is given the opposite evaluation is seized only when its habituation is changed in the course of time; in these cases the suppositions held are often equal, and so is the degree of infirmity, but the affections do not arise equally and are not equal." Thereupon he poses questions such as the following; I shall quote them in his own words, even though the passages are rather long: "Why is it that some who believe that what is happening is of great import, even though they are infirm in judgment, nevertheless deliberate and call on others to advise them, as sleepless Agamemnon did? . . . For it is not convincing that the cause in this case lies in the supposition that what one is pushed toward is a great good; but the question must be asked." I can give Posidonius no answer to his question,

and I believe that no one else will be able to do so, if I am to judge by the actual nature of the facts and by the Stoics of the present. In my time there have been no few (Stoics), and these not undistinguished; but I have heard none of them say anything convincing in answer to the question raised by Posidonius.

It is not entirely clear what Posidonius's positive position is on this matter. He rejects a direct and complete belief-to-desire account but need not be interpreted as endorsing a Platonic tripartite soul.

The most plausible view, we think, is that these texts are consistent with the line we take here: (1) Agency is a single faculty but a permanently complex one. Its primal elements (impulses, reflexes, etc.) are not rooted out by reason and stoic training and are thus present in the sage. (2) Under conditions agents face repeatedly throughout their lives, elements of primal agency generate false beliefs and thence disturbing emotions and passions. See Posidonius on "fresh" distress in Galen, *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*, 4.7. See also Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism* (175ff.), on "preliminary passions." (3) Stoic training (that is, the perfection of agency) allows us to cope with such disturbances successfully, much as we learn to cope with perceptual illusions. The thirsty traveler salivates in relief upon seeing an oasis mirage in the desert, but that "disturbance" dissipates quickly when he learns that there is no oasis. A sage will see mirages, too, whenever the perceptual conditions are right. He just won't fall for the illusion for long. His reason will correct his beliefs, and with that, his affect. Similarly for the somatic states (e.g., arousal reflexes of various sorts) that persistently generate false beliefs, which in turn generate disturbing passions. In the sage, such disturbances will dissipate quickly, when reason corrects the false beliefs.

But it does not follow at all from this that *true* beliefs do not generate passions—even passions an Aristotelian would find wildly immoderate. The poet says

Wild Nights—Wild Nights!
 Were I with thee
 Wild nights should be
 Our luxury!

Futile—the Winds—
 To a heart in port—
 Done with the Compass—
 Done with the Chart!

Rowing in Eden—
 Ah, the Sea!
 Might I but moor—Tonight—
 In Thee!

Aristotelians will have to speak for themselves about whether, on their theory of virtue as moderation, they think Dickinson has come unhinged here. (Dickinson, *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, poem 249.) We certainly do not think so. We do not find *anything* unstoic—anything, that is, of infantile, immature, self-destructive, or unintegrated agency in such thoughts, or in the wild desires

and actions they represent. She is, after all, talking about the luxury available to a heart moored safely in port. And frank as she may be, she is not, we suppose, talking about orgasms prolonged and intensified by brutal drugs and strangulation.

Historically, most of our efforts to talk about our views on the passions have been directed to dealing with its dangers rather than its safe luxuries. But nothing in our fundamental doctrine (as opposed to therapies and moral-training manuals drawn up for the benefit of those at risk) opposes passion as such. Infantile or bestial passion, yes, insofar as it lacks (or subordinates) propositional content. Immature, unintegrated, or incapacitating passion, yes, insofar as it is incompatible with the perfection of agency. But read the poem again. Then try to make an argument that such intensity is ruled out by the aim of perfecting one's agency. We think the try will fail.

It may be that this point was not adequately understood among ancient Stoics. Their standard line does seem to have been the one Martha Nussbaum characterizes as the "extirpation of the passions" and discusses with characteristic brio in *The Therapy of Desire* (chap. 10). And they certainly appear to have assumed (as opposed to have argued) that the sage's *eupatheia* would be tranquil. Notice, however, the telling point Nussbaum later makes in discussing Seneca on anger (chap. 11). Seneca's description of the physical signs and incapacitating effects of anger (and the gruesome examples he gives of it) make it pretty clear that what he is discussing is infantile or incapacitating rage. And it is not at all clear to us that the striking example Nussbaum gives from Elie Wiesel poses a problem for stoics.

Wiesel was a child in one of the Nazi death camps. On the day the Allied forces arrived, the first member of the liberating army he saw was a very large black officer. Walking into the camp and seeing what was there to be seen, this man began to curse, shouting at the top of his voice. As the child Wiesel watched, he went on shouting and cursing for a very long time. And the child Wiesel thought, watching him, now humanity has come back. Now, with that anger, humanity has come back. (403)

She continues:

Wiesel's soldier was no Stoic. But it was just on account of the extremity of his justified rage that the child Wiesel saw him as a messenger of humanity. Seneca's treatise [*De Ira*] urges the extirpation of anger. It ends with the famous injunction "Let us cultivate humanity." *Colamus humanitatem . . .* Can the Stoic have humanity while losing rage?

The question is beautifully posed. The answer, we think, lies in seeing that the soldier may well have been a perfectly good stoic. Time, place, duty, consequence, and words available to represent the truth are all factors in what counts as appropriate. Nothing in the event as described implies the least compromise with the stoic conception of virtue. No duty was breached. No one suffered or was incapacitated by the soldier's anger; on the contrary, a suffering child was comforted by it. And in that place even a sage might be forgiven for not finding elevated language accessible. Nothing in our doctrine entails that sages lack this sort of comforting passion.

Nonetheless, it may be that when ancient Stoics (even Posidonius) tried to imagine what kind of affective life would follow from the sage's beliefs, they were too quick to think that it would be a tranquil one. For the standard array of relevant ancient texts, see Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (sec. 65). Striker, in "Following Nature: A Study in Stoic Ethics" (62–73), is sharply critical of Stoics on this point. But as Posidonius himself suggests, if passions in the mature agent supervene on beliefs, then sages *ought* to be the very people *most* passionately affected by virtue—and be *surpassingly* passionate about it because they perceive it to be surpassingly valuable.

How wild, though, or immoderate will the sage's passion be? We confess we have typically supposed that sages will be much cooler and calmer, emotionally, than the rest of us. Suppose that is so. Suppose (in line with the standard sort of abuse we have provoked) that the stoic sage cannot even contemplate having a wild night in a safe port with a wonderful poet. Even so, we should consider carefully why this is so. It may not be due to the absence of passion in the sage. It may rather be due to a complication in the causal link between the sage's beliefs about virtue and his passions. For example, the sage's coolness may be due to the way that the link is weakened by his awareness that he is fallible and possibly mistaken about what virtue requires in particular cases. It will not necessarily be weakened in every case, however, because (as in the case of Wiesel's soldier) general facts about human fallibility are not always a relevant consideration.

Sages as humans. There is one passage in the ancient Stoic fragments that suggests that the Stoic sage (or wise man) is imagined to be omniscient. Other fragments, however, indicate otherwise, and the whole idea of the sage's being omniscient is exploded convincingly in G. B. Kerferd's "What Does the Wise Man Know?" He also argues that the most plausible construction of the texts indicates that the knowledge possessed by the sage was not a knowledge of the details of what the special arts, crafts, and sciences produce but rather a knowledge of the general outlines or principles involved and how to put them into practice in making progress toward virtue. Sages were humans, not gods.

But were they male humans? Until perhaps the late 1980s, academic discussions of the Stoic sage were quite likely to be cast in terms of the "Stoic wise man." Wolfgang Haase (1989), in opening his comment on a paper with that title, gives a nice argument in terms of ancient Stoic ethical documents for using the more inclusive term "Stoic sage." That reform seems to have been adopted. He does not, however, consider the possibility that sagehood might be available only to women—a possibility noted above but not actually endorsed, even though it is more or less followed in chapter 7. Thanks to William Stephens (2000) for these references.

Among the fairest and most elegant descriptions of the Stoic sage that have been culled from the ancient sources is the one given by Amélie Rorty, in "The Two Faces of Stoicism: Rousseau and Freud." Here is a portion of it, used by permission, with her copious citations omitted (Rorty, 1996, at 343–46).

The sage can, without endangering his rationality, have the physical reactions that—had they been the responses of a common man (phaulos)—would function as passions. It is the functional role of a psychological state—its etiology

and consequences—rather than its intrinsic character that identifies it as a pathos. The sage and the common man are, at a generic level, constituted alike. Both observe and follow natural necessity, both attempt to preserve (what they take to be essential to) their lives; their primitive hormai are alike naturally providentially well-designed to protect bodily functioning; . . . the phantasiai of the sage, like those of the ordinary man, corrigibly represent the effect of some part of the world on him, situated as he is. Like the ordinary man, the sage has perceptual illusions, hallucinations and reflex motions; like the ordinary man, he is, initially at least, moved by hunger, exhaustion and sexual arousal, with all the standard physical swellings, shrinkings and heavy breathing appropriate to those conditions. And while the sage may not run from a charging bull in a panic of fear, he does run in haste, seeing the danger of a slow dignified retreat when it is appropriate for him to preserve his life.

To be sure, the thick intentional descriptions of the thoughts and actions of the sage differ from those of the common man whose phantasiai and hormai are partial in both senses of that word. Fragmented and incomplete, perspectively distorted, illusory phantasmata can mislead the fool. But although the fool can be mistaken about what is important and valuable, many of his phantasiai and hormai are, as far as they go, correct and well-formed. He'd hardly survive if they were not. . . . By contrast to the perfect pitch of the sage, the common man might be said to be tone-deaf rather than deaf, color-blind rather than blind. What is distorted and partial in the psychology of the ordinary man is complete and whole in that of the sage. His psychology—his attitudes and actions—are shaped by his functional role in a well-structured cosmos. No matter how dehydrated he is, the sage doesn't rush to drink what (even to him) appears to be water on the horizon: he understands that his phantasiai express the "general laws" of optical phenomena. The intentional description of his activity—the character of his actions—includes his understanding of the providential role of hunger, exhaustion, reflex actions and sexuality in preserving the cosmic order. Rather than reacting passively, he acts from his understanding of his place in the natural order.

But if the sage looks like a fool, sometimes seems to act like a fool, in what sense is he not a fool? What . . . does the ordinary man believe that the sage does not? The ordinary man's errors . . . all spring from the same source: he is mistaken about what is genuinely valuable because he does not understand who and what he is. In moving naturally to preserve what he takes as his own . . . , his impulses . . . are often misdirected to preserve or acquire things that are not fundamentally important to his nature. It is in this sense, rather than because he moves in a frenzied manner, that the common man's impulses are excessive. . . .

By contrast, the sage can be a more actively devoted citizen and father than the common man. Though he is indifferent to much that moves the ordinary man, he can—knowing the erosive effects of poverty—attempt to preserve and

even enlarge the family property, doing so with alacrity, from a just assessment of the need for reasonable security, rather than from competition or greed. Rational sagacity can adopt austere policies: a sage judge can rationally and justly condemn a criminal to severe punishment when doing so best serves the interests of the city; he can counsel harsh measures in war, acting from a rational assessment of the most effective course rather than from pain-ridden revenge at the enemy's unjust injuries to his city. . . . If he lives in tyranny or is mortally ill, suicide may provide the only scope for rational action.

The distinction between acting rationally and moving from a pathos-ridden impulse depends on the agent's role in constituting what he does. And this, in turn, depends on his conception of "what is his own." . . . The sage is distinguished from the ordinary man . . . by his recognition of his place in the cosmos. Unlike the common man, the sage knows that his physical constitution can expose him to epistemological danger, and that even a rational person can briefly find himself with the weak opinions of a fool. Indeed he can rationally assent to just those impulses which would in the ordinary man be partial passions, doing so from an understanding of the hierarchical structure of permissible and instrumental goods. (343–46)

There is much more in this vein, but that should be enough to make the point that there is ample warrant in the stoic tradition for correcting the picture of the sage painted by critics. Marcia Baron, *Kantian Ethics Almost without Apology* (chap. 6), considers in a helpful way Kant's endorsement of the Stoic sage as having a "sublime" way of dealing with loss and futility. In defending Kant she makes points about control of emotion, futility, and agency that are similar to some of the things we say on those topics.

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correspondence from Julia Annas, Stephen Darwall, and John Marshall that pressed me to revise an earlier version of what is now the section called “Exalted Virtue.” The section on the argument for virtue owes its existence to queries from two readers for Princeton University Press—and to the skepticism some contemporary philosophers have expressed about whether there is an argument at all (as opposed to a description) to be found in ancient versions of the cradle argument. James Rachels and William Ruddick’s chapter, “Lives and Liberty,” in *The Inner Citadel: Essays on Individual Autonomy*, has for some years been very useful to me in thinking through matters related to a distinction they make between one’s biological and biographical lives. John Searle’s articles “The Mystery of Consciousness: Part I” and “The Mystery of Consciousness: Part II” were especially useful in sorting through some recent literature on the nature of consciousness.

Happiness

STOICS put the discussion of happiness at the end of their ethical concerns and are sometimes impatient with protracted discussions of it. Even children rarely seek happiness directly, in the sense of directly seeking pleasant mental states. And when that narrow sense of happiness (as pleasant affect) is replaced with the conception of stoic eudaimonia constructed by fit or virtuosic agents, stoic doctrines about it seem obvious consequences of our account of virtue. We hold that happiness as understood by mature and fit agents is to be understood in the context of their whole lives, not only of transient mental states. We hold that it is achievable only through a proper balance of stability and control in the exercise of agency. We hold that virtue is necessary for happiness, and sufficient for it too, even in adversity, as long as ideal agency can be exercised. Happiness in this broad sense—eudaimonia—is the polestar of our ethical theory. It is a reference point for navigation, and when sages reach virtue they coincidentally reach happiness in the most exalted sense imaginable; and that is inspiring. The rest of us, who only more or less approach virtue, seem able only to orbit happiness like comets, swinging in great ellipses in which near-virtue intersects only rarely, briefly, and dangerously with near-happiness. This misfortune of orbital mechanics, however, constitutes no objection to the argument that virtue is inseparable from the agency that produces it, and from the happiness that only it produces.

A Whole Life

We learn very early that things look different in retrospect. We get through some fearful, painful thing and find not only that it was bearable but that it seems insignificant in relation to everything else we have experienced, and in relation to the future (good or bad) that stretches in front of us. We reach some much anticipated goal and find ourselves disappointed by how transient the pleasure of it is, and how trivial the achievement. It soon becomes clear to any healthy agent that a restricted frame of reference distorts rational assessment of any endeavor or experience. This is reinforced by the agent's efforts to integrate and optimize the success of her various endeavors—a process that often requires sequencing, modulating, and subordinating them in surprising (but satisfying) ways. The

combination of surprise and satisfaction—in the postponement of projects and in the modulation of motivation to pursue them—immediately suggests to the agent that the scope of her efforts to integrate and optimize her endeavors is crucial to her success in doing so. A restricted frame of reference is systematically misleading. But what is an unrestricted frame of reference in this context? The developmental project of agency is to move from health to fitness and then, through ideal agency, to virtue. Ideal agency is comprehensive; it aims to integrate and optimize the success of every single thing we do, in relation to everything else we do or might do, over our entire lives. The ideal agent's frame of reference is thus her whole life, represented as accurately as a human being can remember its history and imagine its future, and lived as intelligently as a human being can exploit its possibilities.

The picture of a whole life for an ideal agent, then, is the picture of a life that is an organized whole, with no unconnected parts. It is also the picture of a life replete with successful ventures, opportunities taken, lessons learned—in short, replete with intelligent activity carried out with the benefit of an impressive array of developed endowments and constructed traits, operating in a challenging environment. But there are at least three other concerns about the wholeness of a life that should be considered.

Two of them have to do with how a life can be completed, as opposed to simply being ended. One is that a completed life—one that has run its full course—is a life that completes its particular biological arc, from infancy to death, *in terms of the physiological possibilities available to it*, and is not prematurely ended by disease, natural disaster, accident, or murder. The other is that a completed life is a life that is finished in a biographical sense—one whose “story” is essentially complete, even if its biological arc is not. Ideal agents, we suppose, will want the two sorts of endings to coincide in their lives. They will want to finish what they start in a biographical sense and thus not die prematurely, but they will not want to linger pointlessly. These two concerns will be addressed later in this chapter in the section on “A Good Life.”

The Meaning of Life

The third concern about wholeness is quite different. It is about how one's life (including one's completed life) can be assessed in terms of the larger things in which it is embedded, from local legend to cosmic history. You do not have to have world-historical ambitions, or even be a sage, to ask questions about the meaning of your life.

The ancient Stoics had a theological reason for thinking their lives had cosmic significance. They believed that the universe itself was a single, great,

rational being with providential purposes with respect to human beings. They apparently found this both philosophically and personally significant—a source of solace even though the cosmic purposes were unknowable. God provided for humans in starkly different ways, for reasons that were unclear. God was silent. Negotiation was not possible. Prayer was pointless. Nonetheless, the very idea of this universe was inspiring and a source of awe. The fact that human beings had a small measure of similarity to the universe's rational agency—the universal *hêgemonikon*—was a source of confidence and satisfaction. No matter how badly one's own life was going, it was reassuring to think that following nature was meaningful and rational in the sense that it was following the divine purpose in the universe as a whole. That much alone could be enough to motivate a hymn of praise.

The Meaning within Life

The Epicureans rejected the idea of such a providential cosmic being, and Marcus Aurelius seems to have wavered on the question. So, perhaps, did Panaetius. But as many thinkers in many cultures throughout history have mentioned, one can have meaning *within* one's life even without the assurance that there is a meaning *for* one's life from some external source. Atheists and agnostics of many sorts are often happy with that sort of assurance. And some modern stoics may find the ancient Stoic picture of the universe alternately compelling and repulsive; alternately sublime and grotesque, comforting and terrifying.

In the version of stoicism presented in these pages, the consolation of theology is not available. So when a stoic sage in our sense asks questions about the meaning of her life, what matters to her is not whether there is meaning *for* it in its cosmic significance but rather a meaning *within* it in the way it is lived. What matters is its virtue—the extent to which it is the product of the exercise of ideal agency. That means, in part, the extent to which it exemplifies the excellent exercise of human agency assessed in terms of all its circumstances, from local to cosmic. In sum, then, a good life for the sage (happiness, or eudaimonia in the sense constructed by the exercise of her agency) is a life that is unified, replete with activity that exemplifies the virtuosic exercise of practical wisdom in every context, from local to global.

Stoic happiness and ordinary good times. Stoics have occasionally claimed that, for the sage, eudaimonia somehow replaces ordinary happiness. This has been the source of much confusion, among both stoics and their critics, and is partly responsible for the false notion that the stoic ideal is a life devoid of the ordinary pleasures of sex, food, drink, music,

wealth, fame, friends, and so on (let us call them *nonagency* pleasures or, more generally, nonagency goods) that either are not necessary for or do not come merely from the exercise of agency itself.

To avoid the confusion, we make the following observation: if we consider what is necessary and sufficient for a good life as conceived and lived by an ideal agent, we will not be able to put any particular set of the nonagency goods on the list. This is so because it is clear that healthy agents regularly sacrifice one or another of all such goods in order to integrate and optimize their lives, and because it is clear that sages have the ability to thrive as sages in extremely reduced circumstances—circumstances in which their only pleasure (though a very considerable one it is) comes from the virtuosic exercise of their agency. The joy that comes from that is the joy that comes from virtue itself, and since virtue is what ultimately matters to the sage, that joy is (for the sage) sufficient for a good life (happiness), even in the ordinary sense of the term. It is true, then, that stoic happiness does not *necessarily* include nonagency pleasures—all the other possibilities for what we ordinarily call having a good time.

But it is highly misleading to go on to say that such pleasures are superfluous, or that they “add” nothing to virtue. They do not add *virtue* to a virtuous life, but they add something else to it. They add ordinary pleasures to it—something stoics decidedly do not reject. (Think of this in terms of Galileo’s paradox: The set of all even integers is an infinite set whose cardinal number is \aleph_0 . When we add to that the set of all odd integers we get an infinite set with the same cardinal number. We have not added to the infinity, but we have certainly added to the set.)

If, then, we go on to consider (as the ancient Stoics certainly did) whether a life with both agency and nonagency pleasures is to be preferred to a life with only agency ones, we will get a series of obvious and uncontroversial conclusions that do a great deal to correct the caricature of stoicism. The pleasures of virtue are never to be traded for nonagency ones, but among virtuous lives, those with nonagency pleasures, and nonagency goods generally, are preferred to those without them. Further, with virtue held constant, the more nonagency goods the better.

There is a serious theoretical problem here, but it is not the one stoics are usually taxed with. The problem is that below the level of ideal agency there appears to be no helpful rule for deciding a priori in a given case what mix of agency and nonagency goods is to be preferred. Fit agents for whom virtuosity is directly possible will presumably be motivated, finally, by the endeavor to achieve it. Agents for whom virtuosity is only an indirect possibility—that is, agents who can achieve it, if at all, only by first trying to make it possible where success is uncertain—will presumably be motivated to try to do that. But we know from experience that below the level of ideal agency, there is no simple correlation

between the degree to which we approximate the ideal and the degree to which we experience its goods, or achieve the good life defined by it. One misstep can wreck everything. (Count no man happy until he is dead.) Moreover, some nonagency goods may reinforce, while others inhibit, progress toward the ideal. But which goods do which, in what mixtures and amounts, appears to vary widely from person to person. Thus it is highly unlikely that we can construct a unitary account of the good life for nonideal agents, even a sketchy account that changes in a regular way as agents approximate the ideal. The best we can do, as chapter 3 suggests, is to characterize some general arrangements that seem successful, and construct norms for stoic moral education accordingly.

Plans and narratives. There is also the question of how much and what kind of additional structure a complete life will have—for sages and for the rest of us. Must sages have a rational life-plan? Must their lives have narrative unity? To organize the exercise of our agency resolutely toward making progress toward virtue is surely to have some sort of life-plan. And our development as agents—from infancy to death, primal agency to virtue—is an archetypical narrative. The details of this chapter and the previous one add some sketchy content to these notions. But these discussions also make clear that commitment to detailed long-range plans and thick narratives can be dangerous even for healthy agency, let alone for progress toward fitness or virtuosity. It can block or distort perceptions, reduce our adaptability, fill our lives with indefensible attachments, and so forth.

Thoughtful treatments of these matters by nonstoics always include cautions of this sort, and we certainly endorse them. We also recognize that plans and narratives are ubiquitous in human lives, and that detailed long-range plans and thick narratives often play an effective role for particular people in perfecting their agency. What we do not yet endorse is the notion that the psychology of our development as agents (toward virtue and happiness) *requires* that we live in terms of such enabling plans or narratives—for example, because doing so is necessary for psychological health. That is at best an unproved empirical hypothesis. We suspect it can be defeated by thickly described counterexamples, but we leave that task for another time.

A Controlled Life

Consider an instructive analogy between stability in an airplane and stability in the traits of character that agents develop. A fixed-wing aircraft is said to have positive stability if it stays in, or returns to, straight and level flight unless pressure is continuously applied to the controls. It has

neutral stability when it holds any given attitude (roll, pitch, yaw) in which it is placed, tending neither to exaggerate that attitude nor to return to straight and level flight. It has negative stability when it deviates from any given flight attitude unless corrective control is continuously applied. At the theoretical limit of either positive or negative stability, an aircraft is virtually uncontrollable. On the one hand, perfect positive stability means that any attempt to maneuver using the control surfaces will be defeated by the airplane's tendency to stay straight and level. Advancing and decreasing the throttle would allow the pilot to take off, gain altitude, fly in a straight line, lose altitude, and land (very carefully, on a runway lined up with the original). But course corrections would not be possible. On the other hand, perfect negative stability means that an attempt to maneuver would be defeated by the airplane's tendency to deviate from any given attitude. Each such deviation would require correction, and the perpetual oscillation of correction and counter-correction would quickly increase in frequency, amplitude, or both, soon either exhausting the pilot or putting the aircraft beyond control altogether. It is clear that for practical purposes we need a reasonable balance between stability and control.

Agency is a balance of control and stability in an analogous way. That is, it is a balance between our dispositional ability to maneuver effectively toward our goals, responding with practical intelligence to salient events along the way, and our dispositional resistance to being deflected by the shifting winds of impulse and circumstance. When we have perfect control over our conduct, we no longer have anything worth calling character; we are simply untethered actors in an atmosphere of possibilities. When we have perfectly stable dispositions, we no longer have anything worth calling control; we simply follow the trajectory determined by our fixed traits, unable to maneuver at all in response to new information about our endeavors or circumstances. Neither state makes the effective exercise of agency a practical possibility. In aircraft, the ideal level of control and stability is determined by the purpose of the machine and the range of technological possibilities for flying it. If the airplane is designed as a trainer for novice pilots, a significant amount of positive stability is a desirable trait. If it is a high-performance fighter with computer-assisted controls, even some negative stability may be a tolerable trade-off for other characteristics. In the case of agency, the ideal level of control and stability is determined by the task of virtuosic practical wisdom operating in the range of practical possibilities available to human beings.

Fixed and malleable traits. The details of stability and control for agency are mostly matters for psychological theory rather than ethics, but several general observations of a normative sort follow from the account of virtue we have given. All of them, however, depend on noticing that the notion of stability, as applied to the traits of agency, has several

dimensions. One is what we will call the fixity, or conversely the malleability, of a trait. In general, endowments can be damaged or deformed, developments can be reversed, constructed traits can be demolished or remodeled. What is acquired through learning can be transformed through additional learning, and it is obvious that making progress toward ideal agency often requires that a given trait be malleable. But the possibility of such transformation varies, and while it is clear that once ideal traits are achieved we want them to be maximally fixed—that is, insofar as is humanly possible, invulnerable to further change—it is not entirely clear how much stability of this sort we want in the traits we develop at intermediate stages between healthy and virtuosic agency.

A great deal of challenging empirical and conceptual work on these matters remains to be done. Here we will have to be content with this general suggestion for such work. Health is preferred to ill health, fitness to mere health, and virtuosity to fitness. It seems plausible to conclude, both from ordinary observation and from the relevant psychological literature, that we do not need perfect or perfectly stable health in order to pursue fit and virtuosic agency effectively. Deafness in one ear or periodic upper-respiratory infections may present obstacles but do not by themselves prevent the development of ideal agency.

It is also plausible to conclude, however, that there is an identifiable kernel of bodily and psychological health that is a necessary condition of all further development. If this kernel is damaged, so is the capacity to develop agency. Brain damage of various sorts will certainly do this on the bodily side, and psychosis will do it on the psychological side. Moreover, there is a set of traits that jointly constitute a sort of boot sector for agency—a mechanism for recovering from various sorts of failure and loss. For example, people whose default positions with respect to their basic psychological tenor and primal dispositions are characterized by optimism, a sense of security or trust, and primal curiosity, courage, perseverance, benevolence, and reciprocity will be in a position to rebuild productive social relationships even out of the ashes of total war. For when the horrors cease, such people will by default be ready to undertake new cooperative ventures of the sort that can rebuild conditions favorable to human health and development. People whose defaults are pessimism, anxiety, suspicion, and malevolence will continue, and continue to elicit from others, warlike behavior that compromises the health and development of agency.

This suggests that we will prefer to have maximal fixity in the boot sector of agency—in those primal traits necessary to recovering and developing psychological health—throughout the whole process of development, and not just when we have reached the ideal. We will want control of (healthy) primal traits only in the form of having the ability to

refine them, or to suspend their operation in certain situations. We will not want to be vulnerable to having these primal traits erased. Since there is a good deal of evidence to the effect that both healthy and unhealthy primal traits can become fixed in childhood, some important norms for moral education follow rather directly.

Gravitational force. Another dimension of stability in the traits of agency is the degree to which they resist our efforts to maneuver away from the paths they define, and generally attract our endeavors into those paths. Perfect gravitational stability is, we suppose, what the sage achieves for virtuosic agency in making it comprehensively controlling. But notice that maximal stability of this sort is extensionally equivalent to maximal control. Of course this control is dispositional. It need not always be exercised at the level of conscious deliberation and choice, and it need not be exercised at all if practical wisdom has no work to do. Still, this remark about ideal agency implies very little of interest about how much gravitational force various traits short of the ideal ought to have. Obviously, insofar as we need to maneuver outside of a given trait in order to improve our agency, we will want that trait to be weak enough to permit the maneuvers. And just as we prefer not to have neutral or negative stability in an aircraft, we will want enough gravitational pull from our settled traits to make it easy to be drawn back into the paths they define, and to stay there without exercising constant control.

But such observations are mere metaphors. Serious hypotheses about these matters are empirical ones about what sorts of gravitational stability are best for the development and exercise of agency, either in a particular case or in various sorts of cases.

Release and recapture. With apologies for the violence it will do to the gravity metaphor, let us say that yet another dimension of stability relevant here is the extent to which (and speed with which) a trait will release or suspend its gravitational pull on our behavior temporarily and then subsequently recapture it. There are cases in which having control means having the ability merely to turn the operation of a trait off or on, rather than having the ability to transform it or effectively resist its pull. Emotions make a good example here, but there are many others. (The “willing suspension of disbelief” we need in many situations, for example, gives us another large inventory of cases.)

Think of a woman alone in a darkened room—weeping uncontrollably, as we incautiously say. Now imagine that she is in some sort of uniform; that the room is a staff lounge; that colleagues occasionally enter, comfort her briefly, and quietly leave. She is not consoled. Now imagine a sudden emergency. Imagine that she suddenly, and effectively, resumes her role and takes charge with ease, dry-eyed. That is the sort of quick release from emotion that stoics admire. It is not something that is

available only to sages. On the contrary, it is an ordinary phenomenon of healthy agency; and a good thing for us all that it is. Getting such release does not mean that she has transformed her emotional dispositions; nor does it mean (we believe) that she is successfully resisting their power, or suppressing them with iron control. Rather, from all appearances, it means that she simply stopped weeping—stopped feeling that way in order to undertake another endeavor. Such an abrupt stop often has the consequence, in the case of emotions and passions, that they seem gone when the emergency is over. But not always. We can plausibly imagine the woman soon resuming her weeping, unexpectedly, in a church, just as suddenly as she stopped.

The ability to stop feelings (or break attachments) suddenly, when practical intelligence calls for it, is a survival trait. The fact that it is a leading property of some sorts of unhealthy agency should not be allowed to obscure the fact that it is also a property of fitness in agency. Stoic admiration for it, however brutally and provocatively the ancients expressed it, is no more than admiration for ordinary varieties of fitness.

Choosing not to exercise control. It does not follow from the fact that we prefer to have optimal abilities to control our lives that we think we ought always to exercise such control. This is a point that many modern critics of stoicism appear to misunderstand. Good and bad fortune in endowments and circumstances play a very large role in how much control needs to be exercised. Being overcome by emotion is no more problematic for a stoic than being overcome by sleep. Sometimes sleep is dangerous (think of trying to avoid hypothermia), or a dereliction of duty, even when it is desperately needed. So too for all-consuming grief, or lust. But at other times luxuriating in sleep or passion is a harmless pleasure, much preferred to the tightly controlled variety.

Stoic norms about a controlled life are all conditional. What we endorse is the ability to exercise control whenever practical wisdom calls for it. When the world is safe enough, and slack enough, for us to live recklessly or be wildly passionate or refuse even to monitor our emotions, then as long as we can and do recapture control when it is needed, and as long as the wildness does not inhibit our progress toward virtue, we can take as much delight in it as a libertine. (More, perhaps, since it has a rareness for us that it lacks for libertines.) There is nothing in stoic doctrine that means a sage is limited to faint smiles and frowns, as well as silent laughs, groans, and screams.

Life on the Rack

Consider the hapless pilgrim, stripped and strangled by vandals, and left for dead. He is resuscitated, only to be enslaved by traders. They use him

as a beast of burden. Years later, the traders are slaughtered by brigands. The pilgrim's burden is doubled, and eventually he breaks down. He is tormented, used for vicious games, and finally dragged out into the desert night to be blinded and buried alive. The brigands will leave his head out, they say, and a straw in a jar of water within reach. Would he like to face the moon? Or perhaps he would rather not be buried at all but left waterless, broken-legged on the sand? He may choose, or let them choose. In a brief essay, explain the role stoic ethics can or should play in bringing happiness to the pilgrim. 30 minutes. 25 points.

It is not amusing to be asked for a serious response to a less-than-serious question, no matter how vividly put. But we concede that our ancient brethren have done a good deal to invite the sarcasm implicit in the question, and so it must be answered. First, we merely note that nothing in stoic ethics has ever suggested that we think humans are immortal, or invulnerable to having their agency damaged or destroyed by disease or injury. Even the exercise of ideal agency can be stopped in its tracks by excruciating pain, and there is no stoic anesthetic for that, only the prospect of recovery if and when the pain subsides enough to permit sustained thought. If it does, then we recommend the same thing here that we recommend in every other case: the exercise of practical wisdom, all things considered. A sage will wring as much out of that as the situation allows, but it is foolish to pretend that it will be much in this case. The pilgrim has his allotment of fears, courage, physical strength; his attitude toward the brigands; his subsidiary duties, desires, plans; his pilgrimage. And he has very little room or time to maneuver. If the pilgrimage is still his ultimate commitment, his reason-for-being, and if he somehow has the fortitude to continue, then he might wonder about whether he can last longer buried or broken-legged; about the likelihood that help will come; about the likelihood that if help comes, he will be able to complete the pilgrimage. If, however, there is no practical possibility of rescue, and he now wants a release from his suffering, and there is no countervailing reason for prolonging it, then the issue for him will be to get the death he prefers, and to take what solace he can in the little control he can exercise. His happiness in the larger sense will come from his virtuous life, just as it does for sages who have had more fortunate circumstances. If this answer is less than satisfying, it may be because this is not a very instructive case.

Here is a better one. A man lies naked, under a sheet, on a hard table in the bowels of a research hospital. The room is small, dimly lit, cluttered with electronic equipment. The only other person in the room is a woman (a sage) in a lab coat, patiently probing the man's muscles with needle electrodes. The task is a demanding and tedious one—to assess the enervation of small groups of muscle fibers in the man's limbs and

trunk by carefully inserting an electrode into a fiber (into the nerve itself, it seems to the man) and then recording the activity of the nerve, both in response to electrical stimulation and in response to his efforts to tense the pinned muscle. Each probe is protracted and unpleasant enough to cause the man to wince or, in the case of needles next to the bone, to gasp. There is no conversation for an hour, just the relentless probing—now three or four in a lower leg, then a few in an arm, then back to the leg, then to a shoulder. At first the man tries to take a clinical interest in what the woman is doing—observing the length of the needles, the depth and angle of each probe, the numbers that come up on the display she watches. That is good enough for a few minutes, but he soon begins to be obsessed with his sensations—the sweat on his forehead, the heat and soreness at each site after the needle has been removed, the cramps he begins to get when he tenses a pinned muscle. No single stick is difficult to endure, or even very much more than uncomfortable, even near the bone. But after an hour of this, with no end in sight, the relentless succession of small, sharp, insistent pains is maddening. The woman is engrossed in her work. This is research. The man is a patient in another wing of the hospital, but here he is an experimental subject. He becomes irritable but says nothing. Then suddenly he has a pleasing thought, mixed with a little malice. “Doctor,” he says. She looks up from his left ankle, where she is just about to get near another bone. “The difference between this and torture . . . is only the intention.” She grunts and says, “We’re almost finished.” His pleasure in the thought, and in needling his tormentor, spreads over his limbs like a warm balm. It is good for two minutes.

The instructive thing about this case is its ordinariness. For purposes they endorse and join, ordinary agents can bear much more suffering than this, for much longer periods, from much less pleasant people, and not for a moment think their happiness has been compromised. The damage torture does to happiness comes from the malice of the torturer and her defeat of the victim’s agency, not from the pain she causes. Sages suffer on the rack. They differ from the rest of us only in having virtuosic human abilities to resist the defeat of their agency, and to act with practical wisdom under conditions that would defeat the merely fit. When they succeed in that, they suffer less than ordinary agents, both in hospitals and under torture. But virtuosic abilities are not inhuman ones. Pushed beyond human endurance, sages break down. Their lives are nonetheless virtuous for that, even in defeat. For if a sage’s life can end in death without compromising virtue (that is, end in a way that preserves happiness in the grand sense), then it can end happily (or be interrupted without consequence to happiness) even when the sage’s agency is destroyed by suffering. When that happens, the joke, such as it may be, is on the torturer. Next question.

A Good Life

Any attempt within stoicism to borrow the noun “good” for use as an adjective modifying birth, life, or death (or anything else) has to be consistent with the claim that stoic virtue is the only good. So say we all, ancient and modern. Thus anything that is “good for” virtue has to be either a proper part of it, or in some way inseparable from it, or instrumental for it, or at the very least consistent with it. The virtue of justice, for example, once it is integrated by practical wisdom into the whole set of virtues, is a proper part of stoic virtue itself; a proper part of the good. Indifferents are sometimes instrumental for making progress toward virtue and thus to be preferred (good music), but are sometimes not instrumental for it and are thus to be dispreferred (bad music). Music librarians who are stoics should probably not let this consequence seep unannounced into their cataloging systems.

A Good Birth

In stoic terms, a good birth is defined by two things. One is the mother’s continued healthy agency and undamaged prospect for making progress toward stoic virtue. The other is the newborn’s prospect for developing its primal or infant agency along the path to healthy stoic moral agency—all the way through infancy, childhood, adolescence, and into an early version of healthy adult agency. More expansively, a good birth for the newborn is one that is likely to sustain it throughout the lengthy process of developing stoic virtue. That includes being born into a stable and hospitable environment—one that is multigenerational, so that adult family members, friends, teachers, neighbors, and fellow citizens are basically cooperative, peaceful, and helpful to the child as necessary. All this together is the stoic version of being born with a silver spoon in one’s mouth. Or at least a workable wooden spoon. Infants can of course survive and thrive with less.

A Happy Life

It is not very useful to try to describe the general concept of a good or happy life. The results are disappointingly vague. Think of Aristotle’s description of the unique function of a human being, and what would count as being good of that kind (without the rest of Aristotelian ethics). Things improve when we think of the lives that count as good ones under various specific conceptions of a good life embedded in specific ethical

theories—philosophical or religious—and endorsed and lived by many particular individuals.

The following remarks lie somewhere between those poles. They are about what follows just from the specific conception of stoicism proposed in this book. And they are brutally brief and colorless. There is some elaboration earlier in the section on good lives in chapter 3 and its commentary. And what follows will repeat some of the anticipatory remarks in chapter 6.

THE PRIMARY KIND OF STOIC GOOD LIFE

The primary kind of good life is one in which stoic virtue is achieved and sustained. It is primary because stoic virtue-in-the-singular is present in it, and that form of virtue is the only good. Such virtue is achieved and sustained only by the exercise of versatile, virtuoso stoic agency. And such virtue, achieved and sustained in that way, is sufficient for stoic eudaimonia—stoic happiness. To the extent that stoic virtue is sustained and stable, so is stoic happiness. It is thus available to sages and nonsages alike, though in nonsages it will have some level of imperfection—some level of instability, uncontrollability, or lack of virtuosity. The characteristics of stoic happiness of this primary sort are more impressive, however, than the usual references to tranquility and virtue might suggest. Recall this from chapter 6, here somewhat elaborated:

Stoic eudaimonia is a state of being and consciousness that is produced by the active, effective activity of ideal agency. In general, it is characterized by the calm that comes from the absence of further moral struggle and the absence of retrospective regret or prospective alarm about things outside one's control, together with the confidence that comes from the effortless persistence of moral purpose. But the absence of moral struggle, regret, or alarm does not mean the absence of physical and intellectual difficulties generally. It does not mean effortless agentic activity. See the section in the commentary to this chapter under the heading "Virtue and tranquility."

So beyond its basic calm and confidence, stoic eudaimonia will be variable as well as controlled. Specifically, *it will be variable with respect to what is morally required or permitted for stoic agents* given their personal circumstances in the physical and social environments they inhabit, and the roles they either have been given or have chosen. Ideal stoic agents must be able to summon the requisite energy, agentic power, and affective, imaginative, rational, and emotional intelligence to act appropriately in all the situations they face.

Consider the range of things that might be required of a virtuous agent and will therefore be reflected in the sort of happiness virtuous agency

produces. The sage must be able to be “up” for activities that require a great deal of energetic, conscious focus, and physical action when it is required but also be able to relax enough to get restorative sleep when that is necessary. The sage must be able to cope with danger, pain, exhaustion, weariness, and other difficulties as well as with safety, pleasure, a surfeit of agentic energy, and a life of ease. A sage must be able to cope with injustice, imprisonment, isolation, exile, enslavement, and ostracism as well as their opposites. So stoic happiness will vary accordingly. It will vary in terms of the amount of physical and psychological “tension and attention” required to act appropriately (which may vary from extremely tight to extremely relaxed, depending on the circumstances); the hedonic level of experience she has to cope with (which may vary from extremely pleasurable to extremely painful, depending on her circumstances), and the nature of the demands on her emotional life (which may vary from extremely intense to extremely diffuse, or extremely complex to extremely simple, or extremely narrow in focus to extremely wide in focus, again given the circumstances).

The range of good lives (happy lives) available to the stoic sage is thus widely varied. It has both the fundamental stability needed for control and the variability needed for active, effective, virtuosic agentic activity.

THE SECONDARY KIND OF STOIC GOOD LIFE

The secondary kind of stoic good life is one available to a person who is making progress toward virtue but has not fully achieved it. Sages are rare, and they do not announce themselves as such. (Perhaps because merely having that thought about oneself introduces an inappropriate form of self-satisfaction.) So as far as we know, *all* stoics are merely making progress. They are, in the ancient Stoic term, *prokoptontes*. But those lives are good also, since making progress toward virtue is essential for its eventual achievement. Moreover, making such progress involves progress toward the requisite form of virtuoso stoic agency. True, those two sorts of progress yield less-than-perfect virtue. But that is enough to yield a nontrivial form of less-than-perfect stoic eudaimonia. Stoic happiness will be somewhat unstable, but it will exist.

Moreover, such happiness will exist in a range of situations, and with a frequency and stability that might be in direct proportion to the person’s agentic progress toward stoic virtue. That surely constitutes a good life of a secondary kind, even if quietly supplemented by pursuit of a few highly preferred indifferents (good music in the right amounts). It is easy to imagine how people might sometimes get stuck at a level of progress that is quite far from stoic virtue and temporarily lose the motivation to continue. What is harder to imagine is the permanent loss of such motivation

in a person with healthy agentic powers, living in a reasonably hospitable social and political environment, regularly facing the necessity for agentic activity. And for getting it right.

THE TERTIARY KIND OF STOIC GOOD LIFE

The tertiary kind of good life is the one available to anyone currently not on the path to stoic virtue but whose path toward it is still open—still an accessible option. Such people may never have heard of stoicism. Or they may have considered it and rejected it. The fact that their path to it is still open, however, is a preferred indifferent in stoic terms. And from that point of view, the use of the adjective “good” in these cases is weak but very real. These people are potential stoics, after all.

Divergent Paths of Development

Stoicism is cosmopolitan and is quite alert to the fact that most people have other conceptions of a good life, many of which are internally coherent, conscientiously and firmly held. Moreover, the variety of plausible nonstoic conceptions of a good life is quite remarkable. It is not consistent with stoic virtue to be ignorant of these facts, or to think that stoic moral education could (consistently with stoic virtue) eliminate this variety. Stoics do not proselytize, but they like to discuss their views with people who do not share them. And they are certainly aware of people whose psychological development is permanently forced off the stoic path for one reason or another.

Deeply held religious, philosophical, aesthetic, or agentic commitments fundamentally at odds with stoicism have always been present. These are not necessarily cases of truncated psychological development. They are often simply *divergent* from stoic development. They culminate in forms of agency, virtue, and happiness quite different from stoic ones. And sometimes those developments are so profoundly stable that stoic agency, virtue, and happiness are no longer a practical possibility for the people involved. The path to stoicism is closed for them.

Consider, also, cases in which a person making progress toward stoic virtue is diverted from that path for some reason outside of her control. A brain injury, for example, might leave her with damaged short-term memory and poor impulse control. Her continued pursuit of stoic virtue is now permanently arrested, and she is distressed by that. Should she conclude that a good life in stoic terms is now unavailable to her? The stoic answer is yes, but there is no point in making an issue of it. This is true for anyone who is permanently forced off the path toward stoic virtue. That does not mean that their lives are no longer good, and happy, in other senses. And it may be that such a person will eventually adapt

to her new circumstances by giving up stoicism altogether and embracing the notion that what the stoics regard as only preferred indifferents can actually give her a *very* good life. Stoics would disagree (silently) about the theoretical point but not try to argue her back into distress. They, too, would much prefer that her life seemed good to her. Stoics are not cruel, though they can be clumsy.

The same point can be made about people who willingly take paths away from stoicism toward other accounts of the good life. When reasoned discussion fails, stoics wish their critics well and go about their business.

Long Lives and Complete Lives

Duration. Once stoic virtue is achieved in a sustainable way, it seems to follow that its duration is no longer an issue in the way it might be while one is still making progress toward it. After all, nothing can be added to virtue to increase its goodness, once it is achieved and sustained. This thought apparently consoled some ancient thinkers, including some Stoics. Not everyone has been convinced, however. So the question seems to be whether there are reasons for preferring a long good life to a short one—in terms of the version of stoicism described here.

The answer, in general, is yes. There is bound to be (though who knows?) a great deal of forward momentum in the life of a sage—flooded as it is with the kind of active, effective agency, virtue, and eudaimonia that characterize the apex of stoic moral development. There is always more to do if there is more such life to live. And there is possibly even more forward momentum in the life of a person who is actively making progress toward stoic virtue. Stoics never justifiably let go of virtue itself (or the momentum to make progress toward it) just because they are also weary, bored, distracted, or sleepy. Nor do they let go of virtue or its pursuit on a whim, or just because they have the agentic power to end their lives.

Completeness. There are complications, however, for which it is necessary to return very briefly to the subject of an earlier section on a “whole” life in this chapter. For one thing, the evidence is fairly strong that once human beings approach adulthood (and perhaps well before that), they begin to think of human lives in narrative terms, typically stretching over many years of story development from beginning to end. In these terms, lives often end too soon in narrative terms because they are incomplete, and they are too long when they go on pointlessly after they are complete. It is clear that many people have strong feelings about matching their own biological lives (and the lives of people generally) to narrative ones.

It is clear also that stoics would first want to know whether we are talking about things that are within our control or not within our control. Only if completing the narrative arc is within our control is it something

worth discussing. If it is not, then its length is just the definition of completeness in that case. If completing the narrative arc is within our control, however, stoics would be likely to think that the only truly satisfying narrative arc (in stoic terms) is one that at least makes significant progress toward stoic virtue. Good narratives in other senses are only preferred indifferents. So the obvious consequence for stoics would be that any life is too short if it ends before every possible opportunity for making progress toward virtue is exhausted.

Concluding that a given life is too long, however, is complicated by two further factors: the permissibility of suicide and the practical possibility of a good death.

Suicide

Stoicism endorses the permissibility of suicide, but not a requirement of it. It is permissible when suicide becomes the only available way to act virtuously—the only act that is consistent with stoic virtue itself, or the pursuit of it. (See the assortment of ancient texts in the commentary to this chapter.) Here is the reasoning drawn from earlier chapters.

Virtue itself is relentlessly oriented toward active, effective, virtuous activity. So is its pursuit by a person making progress toward it. But a virtuous person who recognizes the imminent inevitability of sleep may in certain circumstances respond to it either by actively resisting it or by actively accepting it. So sleep is sometimes consistent with virtue but not required by it, and sleep cannot require itself. It is weariness that does the requiring. Similarly, a virtuous person who recognizes the imminent inevitability of death (or permanent loss of all agentic control) may in some circumstances respond to it either by actively resisting it to the end or by actively accepting it before that. So suicide, like sleep, is sometimes consistent with virtue but not required by it. There is nothing in virtue itself that requires its own elimination. It is rather the circumstantial elimination of all virtuous options except suicide that does the requiring.

The rest depends on spelling out those circumstances. The ancient Stoics mentioned that the circumstances might reasonably include suicide on behalf of one's country, or one's friends, as well as for avoiding severe pain or mutilation or incurable illness. We now simply add the reminder that suicide of all these sorts is a last resort for stoic virtue—the last available option, given one's circumstances, for the active, effective exercise of stoic virtue-in-the-singular or the pursuit of it. We note here and elsewhere that this must be consistent with the requirements of the special subordinate virtue of justice. Those requirements surely prohibit committing suicide in order to commit murder.

Suicide, assisted suicide, and the law. The ancient Stoics, though they often criticized social and political institutions, seem to have accepted a general obligation to follow the laws under which they lived. So in that case, they might have abided by a legal prohibition of suicide. It is, after all, not required by stoic virtue-in-the-singular. But presumably Stoics would have been in favor of reforming the law on the subject. And they would surely have pointed out that the laws themselves can sometimes be so brutal (for example, for those condemned to death or to slavery) that suicide is the only option left for exercising stoic virtue. That is a reasonable position for modern stoicism also.

Assisted suicide is a bit more complicated. Stoic suicide must always be active—effectively chosen by a stoic moral agent to end his or her *own* life. But the ancient Stoics did not seem to have a problem with assisted suicide, in the sense of helping someone with the arrangements and the act itself. In fact, it seems to have been expected that family and household servants would help when asked. Though again, if assistance from a friend, family member, or physician were against the law, they would not have wanted to put another person in jeopardy in this way. They would have tried to reform the law. We agree but add the obvious point that we obviously have reasons, in terms of stoic ethics, to insist that the act of suicide and the active assisting in it meet the stoic conditions for permissibility. That is, each of those acts must be appropriately virtuous.

Collateral damage. We also add this final remark on the subject. Stoic virtue ethics includes awareness of the damage to others that can be done by a suicide, especially within a circle of family and close friends. This is one of the factors that determines whether one's suicide is permissible in the first place. And of special importance in thinking about this is considering whether one's suicide is likely to compromise others' own progress toward virtue.

Stoics assume that for sages, practical wisdom will deal with this problem of anticipated damage adequately. The sage will prioritize and integrate all the separate virtues into virtue itself, and self-interest will not overwhelm concern for others. (If Socrates is our model, and escape is an option, we will not drink the hemlock before we consider the consequences for our family and friends, as well as for ourselves, and for justice at large.)

This assumption cannot be made for people who are not sages but are only making progress toward virtue. As the level of their interest in committing suicide rises, they may systematically, and subconsciously, underestimate its potential effects on others. Stoic moral education might counsel us all, then, from the beginning of all discussion of the permissibility of suicide, that anyone considering it must reduce the risk of collateral damage to something approximating zero. If the person considering

suicide or assisting it cannot do that convincingly, then the permissibility of suicide is correspondingly reduced—and will likely not survive the deliberative process of stoic moral agency. That is, it is unlikely to be consistent with virtue-in-the-singular.

A Good Death

A suicide is not a good death. It is, rather, a permissible way of preempting a bad death. So let us approach the question of a good stoic death negatively. What would count as a bad death for a stoic? The answer coincides with common wisdom, stoic and nonstoic alike. A bad death is a lingering process filled with both pain and suffering, for which one is not well prepared, over which one has no control in managing the timing of the death or the amount of pain and suffering in it, and which occurs before one has had a reasonably complete life in some meaningful sense. A good death is the opposite of that.

So a good death is peaceful ending of a reasonably complete life. It is also well prepared for, and a process over which the dying person has significant control in terms of timing and pain management. Those things are highly prized by many people and are highly preferred indifferents for stoics. To that, we add only this: a good death in stoic terms is one that occurs simultaneously with the permanent disintegration of one's stoic agentic powers, virtue, and happiness; not before that, and not after that. That means, in practice, that the end of one's biological life is a good one if and only if it coincides with the end of one's *autobiographical* life—the ability of an agent to tell the story of her own life, at least to herself.

Joy

In fortunate circumstances, when life is a costless feast, a sage has as much fun as anyone else—more, perhaps, because she is better at exploiting the whole range of available delights. Her palette does not get dull. Socrates, we should remember, could make himself at home at a rowdy banquet, and not by declining the wine. But he did not suppose that such transient joys amounted to anything much in the long run. Filling his life with them was not his aim, though he surely would have thought it foolish to spurn them for that reason.

It is equally foolish, we think, to ignore two prominent and permanent features of ordinary experience: one is that for most of us, a life full of pleasures but empty of purpose would not be a happy one. In fact, in the end, if that were all there was to it, we would think it was

an empty life. Without the vessel of purpose, pleasures drain away without residue. This appears to be a psychological consequence of ordinary, garden-variety healthy agency, because it always subordinates the pursuit of pleasure to the task of optimizing the success of our endeavors generally, and healthy agents always have a much more complex agenda than merely getting and sustaining pleasant mental states. (*Pace*, Epicurus.) It follows that if you endeavor to become or remain a healthy agent, and expect to succeed at that, it will be futile for you to try to build a happy life by accumulating pleasures. The coffers will be empty every morning.

The other feature of ordinary life to notice is the unreliability of good fortune, and hence of its joys. It is sensible to be prepared for famines as well as feasts. And there is this considerable consolation for agents who are fit for adversity: the effective exercise of agency always brings joy, even in the midst of misery. Its sustained exercise in difficult, complex, richly varied endeavors is deeply engrossing and profoundly pleasurable. Sustained over a whole life, it is, in the end, satisfying for most of us—nonempty, surely, even if trivial on a cosmic scale. This sort of happiness with one's life also appears to be a psychological consequence of healthy agency—at least when the exercise of it has come to be the determining factor in most of our waking experience.

The life of a stoic sage is filled with such happiness, as a consequence of her virtue. We imperfect ones, who see this prize and sometimes, in favorable circumstances, fleetingly possess it, cannot wish less for those we love.

Commentary

Ancient doctrine: eudaimonia. Julia Annas (*The Morality of Happiness*, 329–35) rightly insists that we must take eudaimonists at their word—that they are, in fact, ultimately giving an account of a happy life, not just a virtuous one, and that these things are conceptually distinct. We agree. It matters, theoretically, whether we stoics can make good on our claim (against Aristotelians, among others) that virtue is both necessary and sufficient for happiness, because unless that is true we will not be able to reconcile our eudaimonist theoretical project at all with our claim that although happiness may be our ultimate goal, we seek it by way of the virtue we achieve through the perfection of our agency.

The ancient fragments (as opposed to the work of Cicero; see below) are very skimpy on the subject of stoic happiness—not on what the theses about it were, but on the arguments for those theses. Gisela Striker (“Ataraxia: Happiness as Tranquility”) discusses the way in which tranquility characterized, for ancient Stoics, the mental state associated with happiness—though that mental state did not constitute happiness; Annas (*The Morality of Happiness*, chap. 19) reconstructs arguments on the sufficiency thesis. A recent anthology, Øyvind Rabbås et al., *The Quest for the Good Life: Ancient Philosophers on Happiness*, covers a wide range of ancient Western views on the subject of happiness, including Stoic ones, from before Socrates to Augustine. Daniel C. Russell’s *Happiness for Humans*, in chapters 5–8, analyzes the similarities and differences between the ancient texts in the Socratic, Aristotelian, and Stoic traditions on the sufficiency thesis and ultimately, in the final chapters, emerges with an account of happiness as “a life of embodied virtuous activity . . . [in which] that activity must be wise and emotionally healthy (i.e., virtuous) in order for it to be happiness” (199). Though based in the ancient texts, especially the Stoic ones, Russell’s view of happiness is extrapolated by way of contemporary psychological accounts of embodiment into a contemporary form of eudaimonism that is both similar to and interestingly different from the one proposed here in chapters 5–7, minus the stoic developmental story.

The range of ancient Stoic fragments can be seen nicely in Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (sec. 63); and it is especially worthwhile to read their commentary on these matters. Here is part of it, reproduced with the permission of the publisher. Parenthetical references refer to sections and items in their book; “SVF” refers to a collection of fragmentary texts done early in the twentieth century: Hans von Arnim, *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* (4 vols.), in Latin.

In Hellenistic philosophy the different schools were regularly characterized by their different specifications of the end, a concept on whose formal definition they could all agree: “that for the sake of which everything is done, but which is not itself done for the sake of anything,” or “the ultimate object of all desires.” Such agreement, which may seem curious within the non-teleological context of modern ethics, was made possible by the scarcely questioned assumption . . . that human life must be purposive by nature, and by the identification of the

end with “happiness” (eudaimonia) or “living well.” . . . Hence investigation of the end is a functionalist inquiry, a specification of the kind of life which will enable a person to fulfil his or her nature, to act in the way that human nature requires. Agreement on these points imposes important constraints on Greek ethics, which may seem to cause particular difficulty for the Stoics. They accepted the then traditional conception of the end as “living well,” “being happy,” “the fulfilment of all desires.” Yet they made moral goodness the sole constituent of “being happy,” going as far as to claim that the sufferings of Priam will not disturb the virtuous man’s happiness (SVF 3.585). Thus they rejected the Aristotelian doctrine that happiness requires some good fortune in addition to virtue. If the Stoics had conceded this point (a fundamental objection to their ethics), they would have had to drop their grand claims concerning the wise man’s supreme and impregnable happiness (L), and their insistence that happiness is always in his power (M).

The paradox would be toned down if we took the Stoics to be redefining “happiness,” severing its connexions with any accepted sense of “self-fulfilment” or satisfaction of desires. Their ethics is often represented along these lines—a move away from teleology towards the conception of doing what is right because it is right, with “self-satisfaction” totally excluded from all consideration. Yet this Kantian reading of Stoicism is a serious misrepresentation. The Stoics preferred being charged with paradox (cf. 66A) to dropping their teleology and eudaemonism. The material here (A, B_p, C₄, F, H, I) shows that virtue and vice respectively are taken to constitute happiness and unhappiness as these latter terms were understood within the mainstream tradition. What “happiness” means, in this regard, is summed up in a definition falsely attributed to Plato (Definitions 412d): “the sum of all goods; a potency sufficient for living well; fulfilment in accordance with virtue; a living being’s sufficient benefit.” The Stoics claim that a virtuous man does possess all that he needs to fulfill himself, to live well, to have his desires satisfied (cf. L, M). They challenge us to suppose that a life so constituted (not of course the intermittent satisfaction of momentary wants) is what we all naturally desire, or would desire, if we were capable of fully grasping its benefits to ourselves as well as to those who benefit from being the recipients of virtuous actions.

Detailed arguments for the Stoic conception of happiness, if there were any, have not survived. But plainly happiness is neither synonymous with virtue nor arbitrarily constituted by virtue. Zeno defined happiness as “a good flow of life” (A2), and this is expressed by Seneca (F 1) as “peacefulness and constant tranquillity.” The benefits of such a state, which recalls Epicurean “freedom from disturbance” (see 21), may have been regarded as intuitively obvious. Zeno at any rate appealed to the unhappiness of “those who live in conflict” (i.e. with themselves) as the ground for his account of the end: “living in agreement,” amplified in keeping with the etymology of *homologoumenos* by “living in accordance with one concordant reason” (*logos*, B I). If, as the Stoics argued independently (61 B 8), rational consistency defines virtue, the benefits of happiness must be constituted by virtue (cf. Seneca’s procedure in F). Like virtue, happiness is an all-or-nothing affair, and it is complete at any moment (I), a striking difference from Aristotle’s insistence on a whole lifetime. Since happiness has no

requirements except moral goodness, the Stoics could disregard the ordinary vicissitudes of life in defending its momentary completeness.

Does the Stoics' eudaemonism sully the purity of their morals? Only for the purest of Kantians. Panaetius was prepared to say that the virtues have our own good or happiness as their objective (G), and that each virtue is targeted at a different "colour" of this single objective—an image which explains the "different perspectives" of the inseparable virtues (61 D I). But the virtues are "final" as well as "instrumental" goods (60M): they are both the means of attaining happiness and the excellences of which it consists. Therefore someone who desires happiness, in the Stoics' sense, must desire virtue for its own sake since the former consists in the latter. Like Plato and Aristotle, the Stoics held that the intrinsic desirability of the moral life is identical to a person's self-fulfilment. There is thus a continuity between the primary impulse to self-preservation, directed at physical well-being, and the self-satisfaction of the moral life. But "self," in the case of the latter, is extended to something analogous to Kant's universalized imperative—the good of all rational beings: harmony of one's own nature and that of the whole (C 2–4) or "community" (K).

Cicero, in *Tusculan Disputations*, devotes the whole of Book 5 to a defense of the sufficiency thesis, with special attention to whether the sage can be happy even under torture. The argument ostensibly gets going in 5.v, but after numerous starts it begins to make progress at 5.13.40. The argument winds its way in a leisurely fashion to 5.41.121, but its crucial premises are these:

1. "No one can be happy except when good is secure and certain and lasting" (5.14.40).
2. The good of virtue is secure and certain and lasting because (a) once achieved, its maintenance is within the agent's control (5.14.42), and (b) it is free from the disturbances of the soul that produce wretchedness (5.15.43).
3. Moreover, in its affective dimension, a virtuous life is characterized by tranquility and joy and thus may unproblematically be described as a happy life (5.15.43).
4. No form of happiness can be good unless it includes, or is founded on, virtue, or what is right (5.15.44–45).

Virtue is thus necessary and sufficient for happiness. It remains, then, to be shown (as against the Peripatetics) that nothing needs to be added to a virtuous life to make it a supremely happy one, even on the rack. Here Cicero's argument depends on imagining the life of a sage (despite what he says about this being motivational rhetoric).

XXIV. . . . Let us assume a man pre-eminently endowed with the highest qualities and let our imagination play for a moment with the picture. In the first place he must be of outstanding intelligence; for virtue is not easily found to go with sluggish minds; secondly he must have an eager enthusiasm in the quest of truth; and from this springs the famous threefold progeny of the soul [physics, ethics, logic]: one centred in the knowledge of the universe and the disentanglement of the secrets of nature; the second in distinguishing the things that should lie sought out or avoided and in framing a rule of life; the third in

judging what is the consequence to every premise, what is incompatible with it, and in this lies all refinement of argument and truth of judgment. With what joy, pray, must then the soul of the wise man be thrilled when in such company he spends his life and passes his nights in their study! When for instance he discovers the movements and revolutions of the whole heaven and sees the countless stars fixed in the sky in unison with the movement of the vault itself as they keep their appointed place, seven others preserving their several courses, though far remote from one another in the height or lowliness of their position, and yet their wandering movements mark the settled and regulated spaces of their course—no wonder the spectacle of all this stimulated those men of old and encouraged them to further search. . . .

XXV. To the soul occupied night and day in these meditations there comes the knowledge enjoined by the god at Delphi, that the mind should know its own self and feel its union with the divine mind, the source of the fulness of joy unquenchable. For meditation upon the power and nature of the gods of itself kindles the desire of attaining an immortality that resembles theirs, nor does the soul think that it is limited to this short span of life, when it sees that the causes of things are linked one to another in an inevitable chain, and nevertheless their succession from eternity to eternity is governed by reason and intelligence. As the wise man gazes upon this spectacle and looks upward or rather looks round upon all the parts and regions of the universe, with what calmness of soul he turns again to reflect upon what is in man and touches him more nearly! Hence comes his knowledge of virtue; the kinds and species of the virtues break into blossom, discovery is made of what nature regards as the end in what is good and the last extremity in what is evil, the object of our duties and the rule for the conduct of life that must be chosen. And by the exploration of these and similar problems the chief conclusion of all attained is the aim of this discussion of ours, that virtue is self-sufficient for leading a happy life. In the third place follows that which spreads freely over all parts of the field of wisdom, which gives the definition of a thing, distinguishes kinds, links up sequences, draws just conclusions, discerns true and false,—the art and science of reasoning; and this, besides its supreme usefulness in weighing judgments, affords particularly a noble delight which is worthy of wisdom. But this is the occupation of leisure: let the wise man we have imagined also pass to the maintenance of the public weal. What course more excellent could he take, since his prudence shows him the true advantage of his fellow citizens, his justice lets him divert nothing of theirs to his own family, and he is strong in the exercise of so many different remaining virtues? Add to this the fruit which springs from friendships in which learned men find the counsel which shares their thoughts and almost breathes the same breath throughout the course of life, as well as the supreme charm of daily social intercourse. What, pray, does such a life require to make it happier? And to a life filled with joys so abundant and intense, fortune itself is bound to yield its place. If then it is happiness to rejoice in such goods of the soul, that is virtues, and all wise men have full experience of such joys, we are bound to admit that they are all happy.

XXVI. A. Even in torture and upon the rack?—M. Do you think I meant on beds of violets and roses? Or is Epicurus, who merely puts on the mask of

a philosopher and has bestowed the title on himself, to be allowed to say (and say it indeed he does, really and truly, with my pronounced approval, [in] spite of his inconsistency) that there is no time when the wise man, even if burnt, racked, cut in pieces, cannot cry out: "I count it all as nothing," particularly as Epicurus restricts evil to pain and good to pleasure, makes a mock of this "right and base" of ours and says we are busied with words and uttering sounds empty of meaning, and that nothing interests us except the bodily sensation of either rough or smooth? Shall we allow this man, whose judgment differs but little from the instinct of the beasts, to be forgetful of himself and be disdainful of fortune at the moment when all that he holds good and evil is at fortune's disposal; to say that he is happy in the extremity of torture and upon the rack at the moment when he has laid down that not only is pain the worst of evils but is the only one as well? And he has in no way provided for himself those healing aids to the endurance of pain to be found in strength of soul, shame of baseness, the habitual practice of patience, the lessons of fortitude, a manly hardness, but says that he finds peace in the recollection of past pleasures and in that alone, just as if a man sweltering in uneasy endurance of violent summer heat should choose to recollect a dip in the cool freshness of the streams in my Arpinum; for I do not see how past pleasures can allay present evils. But as this man, who would have no right to say it if he chose to be self-consistent, says that the wise man is always happy, what ought to be expected of those who consider nothing desirable, nothing worth reckoning as a good where rectitude is not found?

For my part, I should say, let the Peripatetics also and the Old Academy make an end some time or other of their stuttering and have the courage to say openly and loudly that happy life will step down into the bull of Phalaris [a metal device in which prisoners were slowly burned to death].

XXVII. For grant that there are three kinds of good things (to make a final escape from the meshes of Stoic subtleties of which I realize I have made more use than I generally do), grant if you will the existence of these kinds of good, provided only that goods of the body and external goods lie groveling on the ground and are merely termed good because they are to be "preferred," whilst those other divine goods extend their influence far and wide and reach to the heavens: why should I pronounce anyone who has secured them to be happy only, and not supremely happy as well?

But will the wise man be terribly afraid of pain? For pain is the chief obstacle to our view: for against death, our own and that of our relatives, and against distress and all other disorders of the soul we have, I think, been sufficiently armed and provided by the previous days' discussions: pain seems to be the most active antagonist of virtue; it points its fiery darts, it threatens to undermine fortitude, greatness of soul and patience. Will virtue then have to give way to pain, will the happy life of the wise and steadfast man yield to it? What degradation, great gods of heaven! Spartan boys utter no cry when their bodies are mangled with painful blows; I have seen with my own eyes troops of youngsters in Lacedaemon fighting with inconceivable obstinacy, using fists and feet and nails and even teeth to the point of losing their lives rather than admit defeat. What barbarous country more rude and wild than India? Yet

amongst its people those, to begin with, who are reckoned sages pass their lives unclad and endure without show of pain the snows of the Hindu Kush and the rigour of winter, and when they throw themselves voluntarily into the flames they let themselves be burnt without a moan; whilst the women in India, if the husband of any of them dies, compete with one another to decide whom the husband loved best (for each man usually has more than one wife); and she who is victorious, accompanied by her relatives, goes joyfully to join her husband on the funeral pyre; the conquered rival sadly quits the field. Never could custom conquer nature; for nature is always unconquered; but as for us we have corrupted our souls with bowered seclusion, luxury, ease, indolence and sloth, we have enervated and weakened them by false beliefs and evil habits. Who does not know of the custom of the Egyptians? Their minds are infected with degraded superstitions and they would sooner submit to any torment than injure an ibis or asp or cat or dog or crocodile, and even if they have unwittingly done anything of the kind there is no penalty from which they would recoil. I am speaking of human beings: what of the beasts? Do they not go through cold, through hunger, ranging the mountains and traversing the forests in their wanderings? Do they not fight for their young so fiercely that they sustain wounds and shrink from no assaults, no blows? I pass by all that ambitious men go through submissively to win distinction, men covetous of fame to win glory, men inflamed with love to gratify passion. Life is full of such examples.

XXVIII. But let us check our eloquence and return to the point at which we digressed. Happy life will give itself, I say, to torture, and following in the train of justice, temperance and above all of fortitude, of greatness of soul and patience will not halt at the sight of the face of the executioner, and, when all the virtues, while the soul remains undaunted, pass on to face torment, it will not stay behind outside the doors, as I have said, and threshold of the prison. For what could be more abominable, more hideous than to be left desolate, severed from its glorious companions? And yet this is by no means possible; for neither can the virtues subsist without happy life, nor happy life without the virtues. And so they will not suffer it to make evasions and will hurry it along with them to whatsoever pain and torment they shall themselves be led. For it is characteristic of the wise man to do nothing of which he can repent, nothing against his will, to do everything nobly, consistently, soberly, rightly, not to look forward to anything as if it were bound to come, to be astonished at no occurrence under the impression that its occurrence is unexpected and strange, to bring all things to the standard of his own judgment, to abide by his own decisions. And what can be happier than this I certainly cannot conceive.

For the Stoics indeed the conclusion is easy, since they hold it the sovereign good to live according to nature and in harmony with nature, seeing that not only is this the wise man's settled duty but also it lies in his power, and so for them it follows necessarily that where a man has the chief good in his power, he also has the power of happy life: thus the life of the wise is rendered happy always. Now you know the utterances I think the most courageous about

happy life and, at the point we now are—unless you have something better to suggest—the truest as well.

Connectedness. In a sage's life, there are no "unconnected" parts. This is so because the sage's agency is comprehensive. Every endeavor is undertaken all things considered and integrated with all others. Yet, especially in fortunate circumstances, the life of a sage can be filled with spontaneous fun. The question is how robustly all these joyous and spontaneous endeavors must be connected or integrated into one's life as a whole. A very robust form of connectedness would require that sages be able (after the fact) to give a "positive" justification for everything they do—in the sense of being able to show that even their spontaneous fun was somehow something they ought to have had, or were required to have, all things considered, by the endeavor of perfecting their agency. Insisting on such a robust connection, however, makes stoicism repugnant in much the way that applying the principle of utility to every activity makes utilitarianism repugnant. Moreover, such a robust connection is inconsistent with the claims (in chapters 4 and 5) about the way stoics use norms of indifference in their practical reasoning.

Stoics do not think connectedness is robust in the way just described. Sages can shout for no reason at all and have harmless, indefensible hobbies—indeffensible in the sense that they are matters of moral indifference. Is this a problem? Does it trivialize the notion of connectedness? We do not think so. Norms of indifference are "remainders," and being able to show that one's bizarre hobby is a matter of moral indifference is a challenging task that establishes a significant logical connection between the hobby and the rest of one's endeavors. Specifically, it establishes that there is *no* superordinate norm, from *any* other endeavor of the agent, to the effect that the hobby (or perhaps the hobbyhorse) is prohibited or ought not to be pursued. That is very far from being a trivial form of connectedness.

Suicide and good death. The relevant ancient sources include these, drawn from Long and Sedley (1986, sec. 66, G and H), and in the case of Seneca, from Long and Graver (2014), and from Inwood (2007):

Cicero, On ends, 3.60–61 (SVF 3.763)

[Speaker: the Stoic Cato] (1) When a man has a preponderance of the things in accordance with nature, it is his proper function to remain alive; when he has or foresees a preponderance of their opposites, it is his proper function to depart from life. (2) This clearly shows that it is sometimes a proper function both for the wise man to depart from life, although he is happy, and for a fool to remain alive, although he is wretched. (3) For the real good and bad, as has been frequently said already [see 59D 6], arise later. But the primary natural things, whether favourable or adverse, fall under the wise man's decision and choice, forming as it were the material of wisdom. (4) Therefore, the reason for remaining in and departing from life is to be measured by those things. For it is not virtue which retains <the wise man> in life, nor are those without virtue obliged to seek death. (5) And it is sometimes a wise man's proper function to abandon life even though he is supremely happy if he can do so at the right time. . . . (6) Since, then, vices do not have the power of providing a reason for suicide, even fools, who are wretched, plainly have the proper function of

remaining alive if they have a preponderance of the things we call in accordance with nature.

Diogenes Laertius, 7.130 (SVF 3.757)

They [the Stoics] say that the wise man will commit a well-reasoned suicide both on behalf of his country and on behalf of his friends, and if he falls victim to unduly severe pain or mutilation or incurable illness.

Seneca (2014), in letter 70 to Lucillius, has these things to say, among others:

14. You will find some people, even some committed philosophers, who say that one should never take violent measures against one's own life, feeling that it is wrong to become one's own murderer. They say one should wait for the end that nature has decreed. Those who say this do not realize that they are blocking the road to freedom. Of all the things the eternal law has done for us, this is the best: we have one way into life, but many ways out. 15. Am I to wait for the cruel action of disease, or of a person, when I could pass through the midst of my torments, shake off my adversities, and depart? This is the one reason why we cannot complain about life: life does not hold anyone by force. The human condition is well situated in that no one is miserable except by his own fault. If it suits you, live; if not, you are allowed to return to where you came from.

27. Reason teaches us that there are many ways of getting to our fate, but that the end is the same, and that since it is coming, it does not matter when it begins. 28. That same reasoning advises you to die in the way you prefer if you have that opportunity, but if not, to do so in whatever way you can, grasping any available means of doing violence to yourself. It is wrong to steal the means of living, but very fine to steal the means of dying.

Seneca (2007), in letter 58:

32. Parsimonious living can prolong one's old age, and though I don't think it should be longed for I also don't think it should be rejected either. It is pleasant to be with oneself as long as possible when one has made oneself worth spending time with. And so we will render a verdict on the question whether it is appropriate to be fussy about the final stages of old age and not to just wait for the end but to bring it about directly. Someone who sluggishly considers his approaching fate is close to being fearful; just as someone who drains the wine jar and sucks up the dregs too is immoderately devoted to wine.

33. Still, we will investigate this issue: is the final stage of life dregs or something very clear and pure—if only the intelligence is undamaged and sound senses assist the mind and the body is not worn out and dead before its time. For it makes a big difference whether it is life or death that one is prolonging.

34. But if the body is useless for its duties, why wouldn't it be appropriate to escort the failing mind out the door? And perhaps it is to be done a little before it needs to be, to avoid the situation where you are unable to do it when it needs to be done. And since there is a greater danger in living badly than there is in dying swiftly, he is a fool who doesn't buy out the risk of a great misfortune by paying a small price in time. Few make it to their deaths intact if old age is greatly prolonged; many have a passive life, lying there unable to

make use of themselves. In the end, there is no crueller loss in life than the loss of the right to end it. 35. Don't listen to me reluctantly, as though this maxim already applies to you, and do evaluate what I am saying. I will not abandon my old age if it leaves me all of myself, but that means all of the better part. But if it starts to weaken my intelligence, to dislodge its parts, if what it leaves me is not a life but just being alive, then I shall jump clear of a decayed and collapsing building.

36. I shall not flee disease by means of death, as long as it is curable and does not impede the mind. I will not do violence to myself because of pain. Such a death is a defeat. But if I see that I have to suffer pain ceaselessly, I will make my exit, not because of pain but because it will be an obstacle for me with regard to the whole point of living. He who dies because of pain is weak and cowardly, but he who lives for pain is a fool.

37. But I digress too long. It is still a topic one could spend the day on—but how can someone put an end to his life if he cannot put an end to his letter? So be well: you'll be happier to read that than non-stop talk about death. Farewell.

Kant admired stoicism in several respects. But Michael Seidler, in "Kant and the Stoics on Suicide," lays out the contrast to the Stoic endorsement of suicide in a particularly clear way.

Stoic emotion. Compact surveys of the Stoics on emotion, in the context of similarly compact surveys of other philosophical accounts of emotion, can be found in Christopher Gill's "Stoicism and Epicureanism" and in Susan Meyer and Adrienne Martin's "Emotion and the Emotions" (3.1.4). Both are especially useful in outlining the Stoic version of a cognitive theory of emotion, the nature of its "first movements," and the role emotion is said to play in the life of the Stoic sage. Gill also makes excellent points about the importance of *oikieōsis* and its attendant emotions for the Stoic account of moral development. William Stephens, in "Epictetus on How the Stoic Sage Loves," outlines Epictetus's austere and perhaps atypically Stoic account of love for a Stoic sage. At book length, Margaret Graver's *Stoicism and Emotion* gives special attention to the norms of emotion in Stoic ethics more generally, focusing mostly on the Greek Stoics, and to the emotions in Stoic accounts of moral development, concern for others, friendship, community, and affection. See also Graver's translation of and commentary on Cicero on the emotions in books 3 and 4 of his *Tusculan Disputations* (Cicero 2002).

Impulse, motivation, and appropriateness. The central reconstructive accounts of impulse and appropriate action in Stoic theory include Brad Inwood's *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism* and Long and Sedley's *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (§57). Richard Sorabji, in *Emotion and Peace of Mind* (chaps. 2–7), discusses the relation of precursors of emotion—what amount to reflexive physiological events such as flushing, sinking sensations, elevated pulse—to full-fledged emotion, and the relation to beliefs. John Cooper's *Pursuits of Wisdom* (4.4) offers a useful discussion of the difference between Platonic, Aristotelian, and Stoic conceptions of the motivational elements in human behavior and the nature of emotion. Gill (2009) does this also.

Self, social relationships, a good life. Stoics wrote a good deal on the appropriate form one's attitudes and social relationships will take if one is genuinely making progress toward virtue. Such texts are particularly interesting in the Roman period. See Seneca's essays on anger and mercy; hardship and happiness (2010; 2014). Tad Brennan's *The Stoic Life* is an important resource here, as is Graver's *Stoicism and Emotion*. Gretchen Reydams-Schils, in *The Roman Stoics*, deals with Roman Stoic accounts of the self, human bonding, parenthood, marriage, and community. Gill, *The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought*, focuses on what he calls "the structured self" in Hellenistic thought generally, but with a significant focus on Stoicism throughout.

Virtue not in isolation. It is perhaps worth underlining something the text mentions only in a glancing way; namely, that the sort of integrated life that stoics pursue should not be thought of as an encapsulated one, having solved only its internal integration problems. Agents live in environments, in local to cosmic contexts, and virtue consists as much in integrating one's endeavors with those contexts as it does in integrating them with each other. Most agents live in social environments, facts about which (together with the agents' purposes) generate normative propositions about participating in social and political life. The Stoics of antiquity differed dramatically from one another in the extent to which they participated in families, social and political affairs, and public life. And nothing in our account of healthy, fit, or virtuous agency—then or now—entails that a virtuous life must be an abundantly social or political one. Such conclusions may (or may not) come out of an Aristotelian ethical theory, but they do not come out of a stoic one. For some people, in some life circumstances, virtue may require or be consistent with ultimate entry into a cloistered, contemplative life. For others it may require or commend lifelong immersion in familial, community, national, or international activity. What is ruled out is merely the truncated or stunted development of agency. Thus, while we may safely say that early withdrawal into a cloister is a bad choice because it deprives the agent of the range of worldly experience that she needs to develop wisdom, we may also safely say that permanent immersion in social life that leaves her no time or energy for reflection is also a bad choice. The overall point, however, is that virtue is as much a matter of achieving proper integration into the world as it is a matter of achieving an encapsulated form of inner harmony.

This result may seem at odds with several aspects of standard expositions of stoic themes: the notion that virtue is self-sufficient, for example, in the sense that the sage needs nothing else to make her life a good one and to sustain her happiness; the notion that stoics are indifferent to worldly goods; the notion that we cultivate emotional detachment. But I have argued throughout this book that these aspects of stoic doctrine have to do with our efforts to immunize ourselves against bad fortune. We do not want to *be* detached; we want to be *able* to detach ourselves when that is necessary to preserve our agency. Our discussions of encapsulation and detachment from the world do not, then, describe our *preferences* about the way our lives should go in fortunate circumstances. Inwood (*Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, 122ff.) makes related points about the ancient doctrines—even the harshest sayings of Epictetus. Among the ways of life that humans can live, we do not have a theoretical preference for the ones that

are solitary, grim, emotionally detached, contemplative, or free of social baggage. Rather, we say that sages are attentive to and act on the norms generated in all the contexts in which their lives are embedded, from local to cosmic ones.

Virtue and tranquility. From Becker, "Stoic Emotion" (266–69):

The abilities of the stoic sage are extraordinary—at the apex of human agency. And it is not easy to describe in a positive way what those abilities would be like. The ancients were clear that while sages would have limited knowledge and power, by virtue of being finite creatures, and would therefore often fail in their endeavors (sometimes lethally fail), they would not be negligent in gathering and interpreting what information was accessible to them, and they would not make mistakes—in the sense of misinterpreting or misapplying their knowledge in humanly avoidable ways. Moreover, sages would be able to cope with all sorts of adversity, difficulty, suffering, and disappointment—to the utter limit of human endurance. That kind of perfection would require sages always to be free from psychological disturbances that would interfere with their optimal exercise of agency, and it would require that their optimal exercise of agency never be disturbed by their own failures (since these would not be due to avoidable errors), or disturbed by any other events beyond their control, such as the death of a loved one, enslavement, or losses of any kind.

What kind of psychology would such a sage have? Here it is easy to make a serious error, and answer that, in general, sages must have virtuosic abilities to cope with whatever befalls them. This is of course true, but only half the truth, and operating with that half-truth produces the following familiar but false picture of the sage:

Sages are poised—perfectly poised—to understand their circumstances and options and to move in whatever way reason dictates. They must be calm, alert, and not committed in advance to a particular course of action that would prevent them from responding adequately to unanticipated events. Attachments to externals—to people, relationships, wealth, health, anything not wholly within one's control—threaten to compromise their coping ability by restricting their options in advance, and must be modified accordingly. Passions and strong emotions compromise coping ability as well because they generate momentum like running full tilt downhill—and render us incapable of certain responses we might need to make (like stopping before we get to the cliff). So passions and strong emotions must go. Similarly for any feelings and moods of a sort that disturb either perception, deliberation or choice. What this leaves for the sage is a form of tranquility and detachment consistent with maximal alertness and readiness to respond to anything that happens. It is as if we imagined the sage as a world-class tennis player ready to receive serve—up on her toes, parallel to the baseline, perfectly balanced for an instant move either to the right or the left, perfectly positioned for a lunge, or a run, or a reflexive block of a shot hit directly at her body, racquet loose in the hand, uncommitted as yet to a forehand or backhand grip, eyes on the ball, but senses registering everything that is salient to making an effective return of serve, and focused, calm, tranquil, detached in the sense that she is not distracted by the crowd, her husband's infidelities, the injustice of her pending prosecution for

tax evasion, the recent death of her first child. And of course we then imagine that this sort of tranquility and detachment is the sage's permanent (waking) psychological condition.

What is wrong with this picture is that it is constructed in terms of waiting for things to happen; in terms of being ready to *receive* serve. But the exercise of our agency is not just passive and reactive; it is also active, intentional, inventive, provocative, determinative. We have to step up and serve the ball, and actually commit ourselves to making a particular sort of return, as often as we wait to serve, or wait to receive serve. And the picture of the sage in action is rather different than the picture of the sage in waiting.

For one thing, inertia—getting going—is as big a problem for action as getting stopped. So is commitment, and momentum. If you have to jump from one rim of the narrow gorge to the other, you don't do it by keeping your options open permanently. You need speed, and running downhill (if you are lucky enough to have a hill nearby) is a good way to get going and keep going, even if it means you reach the point of no return sooner than you would if you tried to jump from a standing start. Focused, energized, muscular affect (*tonos*) of the sort American professional football players work up before each game, and within the game before each play, is not typically out of place either, because the momentum it generates contributes to playing the game *under control* at the highest level. It is, of course, possible to have an inappropriate type or amount of such affect, as inexperienced players often do. And some players find it hard to confine such energy to the game—to leave it on the field, as the saying goes—or to work it up without repeating a litany of false propositions that no stoic could support. But no football coach thinks that such excesses give him a reason to discourage players from “putting on a game face,” because it is understood that this is something that belongs only to the game, and only when it is consistent with playing under control. The point is simply that once we are committed to acting in a particular way, such focused, energized affect and momentum is sometimes appropriate. And agents must always, ultimately, commit themselves to action.

So we must not be misled by the ancient analogy between passion and running full tilt. This cannot mean that extreme, energized affect and momentum is always inappropriate. After all, the ancient stoics were certainly aware of the way in which sleep, especially deep sleep, could compromise rational agency precisely because it creates the opposite sort of difficulty to running. In the running case, it is hard for agents to get stopped; in the sleeping case it is hard for them to get started. I am not aware of any ancient stoic arguments to the effect that because of the difficulty of getting started, sages should not sleep, or not sleep deeply. And I am unimpressed by the comparable argument that because of the difficulty of getting stopped, sages should not run. This makes no sense in terms of the sage's final end. . . . When running is appropriate, sages run. When momentum is appropriate, sages have it.

Notice, however, that this is not an Aristotelian point about the usefulness of passion (for example, of anger) in *motivating* our actions, or even in sustaining the motivation. The ancient stoics were right to insist that for the sage, the knowledge that a course of action is the appropriate one is always

sufficient motivation to pursue it. The point here about momentum is rather a point about *agent energy*—about the physical and psychological resources an agent has to have to pursue an endeavor that is already motivated, and already chosen. Sages who find themselves in close combat may find that they need ferocious energy, affect and momentum as much as they need good blood gases—for fighting under control, to the limit of their abilities. And once we see that the intensity of the affect can be uncoupled from beliefs (recall that beliefs can be held with flat affect; ferociously intense affect can be generated precognitively, in the limbic system), we need not imagine that there is a necessary connection between achieving or sustaining such ferocity and holding false beliefs.

It is certainly true that stoics will reject any passions, or other intense emotional states that involve false beliefs, and it may be true that passions and strong emotions are usually dependent on false beliefs in some way. But such dependence is neither a logical nor a psychological necessity. Since stoics are committed to the perfection of the activity of rational agency, they are committed to cultivating the affective states needed for it. In the case of ferociously intense affective states, stoics will reject those that invoke false beliefs, and find other ways to cultivate intensity when it is needed.

The general point is that in any environment rich with possibilities, the sage's exercise of rational agency will be exceedingly complex, and call for a comparably complex affective life. There will be extended periods of careful deliberation and reflex reactions; mundane routines and high-stakes risk-taking; strength moves; moves requiring little strength but major amounts of fine muscle control; coping with success; coping with unexpected good fortune; coping with failure; inventing remedies for boredom; inventing remedies for the stress of overwork; solving conflict, coordination, and cooperation problems with benevolent people; with malevolent people; being a friend; being a competitor; being an adversary; being an enemy; making war; making peace; making love; on and on and on. And all repeated in a bewildering variety of situations calling for subtly and not so subtly different conduct. It seems highly implausible to hold that any single, well-defined affective state (such as tranquility) could possibly be adequate for sages engaged in a reasonably wide range of endeavors in a reasonably rich set of circumstances. And no matter how limited the sages' circumstances and options might be at a given time, they must be prepared for an unexpected reversal—they must be capable of handling great *good* fortune and an abundance of opportunities.

Thus, whatever ground-down form of affect may be required of the slave of a drunken despot or the prisoner in a death camp, stoic training must aim to produce a psychology that can also respond appropriately to safety, security, freedom, and affluence. Stoicism is for emperors as well as slaves, the rich and famous as well as the obscure, the strong and beautiful as well as the weak and ugly—in the full range of situations in which those people can find themselves. That much has never been in doubt. We simply add here that the appropriate affective dimension of such lives will be as varied as those people and their circumstances, and we think that, once this point is understood, concentrating on the perfection of agency will not move us away from psychological health.

Virtue and love. From Becker, “Stoic Emotion” (269–73):

That leaves love. There are two problems with it. One concerns the sort of quick release mechanism recommended by Epictetus in some notorious passages about replacing lost wives and children, just as one replaces broken tea cups. Apparently the sage is supposed to be able to let go of externals so quickly that grief or suffering from a loss is not an issue. That persuades many people that there must be something phony about the way a sage loves in the first place. They suspect that the only way to achieve this sort of immediate release is to be more or less detached and unloving from the start. And of course stoic insistence that virtue, rather than any external person or thing, is the only thing that is ultimately any good at all contributes to the impression that stoics would resist becoming attached to externals—would resist, in that sense, a fundamental aspect of what we call love.

The second problem with fitting a stoic account of emotion into our ordinary notion of love concerns the way in which stoics must monitor their emotions intellectually, making sure that they do not involve any cognitive errors about what is ultimately valuable or about what affective responses are appropriate—that is, are psychologically healthy and otherwise consistent with the development of virtue. The result of such monitoring is undeniably a persistent sort of highly refined triple consciousness: first-order awareness within the emotional state itself, second-order awareness of being in the emotional state, and third-order awareness of the nature and value of being in that state. A stoic is always going to be two parts observer and one part participant in emotional experience—something that will not only complicate the intentionality of stoic loving, but add a certain remoteness or distance to it as well. If purity of heart is to have simple intentions, then it looks as though it is going to be difficult for a stoic to be pure hearted in love—or whole hearted either, for that matter. Recall the line from an exasperated e. e. cummings: “since feeling is first/who pays any attention to the syntax of things/will never wholly kiss you.”

Pure love. Let me address this purity of heart problem first. Double consciousness—that is, awareness and awareness of being aware—is a necessary part of the kind of rational agency that develops in human beings as they mature. It is in that sense part of our nature as human beings. We can of course choose to regard it as a curse rather than a blessing, and take steps to eliminate the self-consciousness part, leaving only first-order awareness. (I assume that people who valorize emotion would not want to go farther and eliminate first-order awareness.) But once we acquire language, self-consciousness is exceedingly difficult to strip away from first-order consciousness for more than short intervals, and it can be exceedingly dangerous to our health to do so in unfavorable circumstances. That suggests the importance of third order assessments that address, among other things, when it is appropriate to lose ourselves in our experience, and when it is not. (“Kiss me you fool.”—Not now. The attic is on fire.) And the endorsement of the importance of those assessments is not anything unique to stoicism. It is a matter of common sense, not to mention sound psychotherapy.

In the discussion of tranquility I suggested that it was consistent with the notion of stoic sagehood to recognize that the demands of virtuosic activity (as opposed to receptivity) sometimes include temporary, rationally controlled loss of self-consciousness. It seems reasonable to extend that point here to include the observation that third order monitoring of one's emotions will thus sometimes be intermittent, controlled by sophisticated dispositions sensitive to changes in circumstance. A tennis player who is playing "in the zone," as they say, presumably still has a dispositional readiness to respond to things that are dramatically out of the ordinary (such as an earthquake, or an attack by a spectator), as well as the dispositional readiness to come out of the zone when the match is over. In this respect there is little difference between stoics and nonstoics.

Where there is a striking difference on these matters between stoics and at least some nonstoics (call them romantics) is in how willingly they embrace the complexity of intention in actively monitored emotional states and the distancing it involves. Stoics characteristically have no regrets about this at all, when it is the appropriate thing to do, and are unlikely to go out of their way to minimize the occasions when it is prudent to monitor their emotions. Romantics seem dismayed and regretful about the necessity of such monitoring, and are likely to make persistent efforts to avoid it. The argument between them, however, is not properly construed as one about the availability of whole-hearted stoic kisses. It is rather about the value of emotion itself for the good life.

Detachment. Now to the question about detachment. The first thing to point out is that stoics recognize what amounts to a very intimate and deep form of attachment as a fundamental mechanism in human psychology, and an indispensable mechanism for the development of virtue. I refer to the ancient discussions of *oikeiosis*—the appropriation or incorporation of externals so that one's interest in their welfare ceases to be merely instrumental and becomes instead like one's interest in one's own welfare. That is surely the beginning of love: when one cares about another for the other's sake, not one's own. And when this occurs by way of *oikeiosis*—by way of the psychological incorporation of the beloved's interests into one's own—the attachment is as strong and intimate as can be imagined. The ones we love are literally "parts" of us then, as romantics say. Such attachments occur in the normal course of human events, whether we take further steps toward becoming stoics or not.

What is distinctive about stoic love is how stoics define human welfare, and consequently what our deepest cares and concerns are, both for ourselves and for those we love (for those who have become a part of us, psychologically). Stoics care ultimately only about virtue: excellence in the activity of rational agency. But as I have argued, that entails caring about health—both about physical health and psychological health, including the range and depth of emotional experience necessary for it. It also entails caring about life itself, and liberty, and having the material resources necessary for the exercise of our agency. But we care about those things in a subsidiary way. It would be self-defeating to be concerned about them a way that forces us to compromise

virtue. Thus death, disease, discomfort or even slavery is preferable to a vicious life. Since those we love are a part of us, we love their lives, health, ease, and liberty the way we love our own—as preferable to their opposites, certainly, but as nothing compared to virtue.

That means that a sage will not love others in a way that diminishes her virtue—her excellence in the exercise of her rational agency. She will not, for example, become so attached to others that she literally cannot bear the prospect of losing them, any more than she would be attached to her own life in a way that made the prospect of her own death unbearable. Nor would she wish others to love her in that way—to be desolate and helpless when she is gone, unable to bear the loss. What stoics wish for others is what we wish for ourselves: good lives; virtuous lives; including the ability to cope with loss. And we add this thought: when a loved one dies, it is literally not possible thereafter to care about his interests for his own sake, since he no longer exists. We must therefore think carefully about the cognitive content of the sorts of attachments and emotions that survive in us after his death. Whatever they are, however appropriate they may be as an extension of the concerns he had during his life, they cannot be the kind of love they once were: caring for another as we care for ourselves. When we pay attention to that, the alienating brutality of some of the ancient texts on the subject of grief, love and loss will be lessened.

Is stoic love austere? Not especially. To see this, I think it is only necessary to reflect in a commonsense way on this thought: Imagine a person who wants you to be able to say, truthfully, these sentences: “You are my love, my life, my whole life. If I were to lose you my life would be ruined; over.” Those sentences are not about loving you for your own sake; they are not ultimately about you at all. They are rather the declaration of a medical emergency and a plea for help (or a threat). So what can it mean when people say that they want *you* to have that kind of emotional attachment to *them*? That they want *you* to lose your life when you lose *them*? Is that compatible with loving you for your own sake? If so, then it is that sort of love that is austere, not the stoic sort. The only austerity in stoic love comes not from its lack of attachment (there is plenty of attachment), but rather from its readiness to sacrifice everything *except* virtue for love.

Plans and narratives. A young man and woman sit in a parked car, hunched in their overcoats, hands in their pockets. They twist and lean toward each other, arms at their sides. They kiss, surprised by each other’s soft lips, their sudden fierce heat, the length of the lingering kiss, the perfection of it.

“I will go with you,” she says afterward. Meaning I will marry you and kiss you always with just this softness and surprise. I will care for you, and get you through this desolation by anchoring you again in the life of a family, by holding fast to you just so, by satisfying your hungers. I will love you, use you, direct you, teach you our story—the story that began with this kiss, with its perfection, with the knowledge that we are perfect for the parts this kiss sketched for us. You will love your life and love me for it. I will love my life and love you for it. An old, wonderful, well-known story. The best story. And we will live it happily, wisely,

and well if we inhabit it wholly—if we enter it once and for all, and now. “I will go with you,” she says again, burning with desire to play out this story with him, to commit herself ferociously to it, and thus to him.

The young man says nothing. Meaning no. Meaning he will not commit himself now. Meaning this perfect kiss, this electrifying proffer, is not a plan, not something he is ready for, or equipped for. Meaning he thinks there is much he must learn to do *first*, much he must acquire and become *before* he is ready to start this story, if *ever* he starts it, or starts any other. He is suspicious of stories, especially the old, wonderful, well-known ones that so many people inhabit so miserably. He is suspicious of his passions, here, so sudden, muddled, uncontrolled. He thinks he lacks adequate control, adequate knowledge of himself, goals worthy of his possibilities.

“The timing is all wrong,” he says finally.

“Oh, I think the timing is exactly right.” She looks for his eyes, for him to see her eyes, spilling tears.

“And to tell you the truth,” he says, gathering himself to look at her and break the exalted tension, “I’m tired of being led around by my . . .”

He stops in dismay at her tears just as she stops his mouth with her hand, and with her sudden, hopeless laughter. And in the long, fierce embrace that follows, in the midst of the tears and laughter she evokes in him, they come to terms.

From this distance we cannot say what those terms ought to have been—whether more in her direction or in his. But stoicism does not license stupidity. As much as we counsel self-mastery rather than submission to desire (or to an old script), and as little as we value a perfect kiss (or a perfect part) compared to the perfection of agency, we do not counsel timidity and priggish dithering. Nor do we have an *a priori* preference for living out a plan (complete with mission statements, benefit-cost analyses, and Gantt charts) over living out a rousing story in which the parts are largely improvised by the players.

Acknowledgments

Helpful critics have raised several issues about this chapter that called for some clarification. In particular, my thanks go to Julia Annas, Marvin Kohl, John Marshall, and Amèlie Rorty in this regard. Rachels and Ruddick’s article “Lives and Liberty,” and objections from Marshall and Rorty, were of particular use in the section on a complete life. The aeronautical analogy in the section on control is a reworked version of one in Becker, “Trust as Noncognitive Security about Motives.” I am grateful to my Hollins colleague (and pilot) Robert Hansen for discussion of its usefulness and limitations, as well as its details. William O. Stephens (2000) suggested including the topic of suicide; Brad Inwood (recent correspondence) endorsed this and pointed me not only to the usual sources but to the last few paragraphs of Seneca’s letter 58, which is less frequently cited.

In the discussion of virtue and tranquility, and especially in the discussion of the “tension” required for agentic action, I thank Brad Inwood and Richard Sorabji for suggesting I phrase this point to link it to the Stoic use of *tonos*. See

definition II.4 in Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*. In the discussion of virtue and love, the metaphor of “purity of heart is to will one thing” comes from Kierkegaard, *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*, Kierkegaard’s Writings, vol. 15, edited and translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), “Purity of Heart Is to Will One Thing.” The quotation from e. e. cummings is from his poem “since feeling is first” in *E. E. Cummings Complete Poems 1904–1962* (New York: Liveright, 1994).

Appendix

A Calculus for Normative Logic

FOR CLARITY and economy, the exposition here is roughly that of an interpreted axiomatic system. It is, however, replete with rules of inference characteristic of a system of natural deduction, and by the standards of pure logic it is an inelegant contraption in many other respects. The aim here is to apply existing logic to ethics, not to extend logic in a significant way.

Nonetheless, in order to represent moral reasoning adequately, it is necessary to do several things that diverge from mainstream accounts of deontic logic. We employ three normative operators, for example, to mark the distinction between things that are mandatory, advisable but not mandatory, and completely optional. We insist that normative propositions always be constructed from facts about the endeavors of individual agents. And we propose to preserve the truth of conflicting normative propositions—that is, to preserve them as accurate representations of persisting conflicts within and between agents—by resolving inconsistencies with a combination of two basic strategies, rank ordering and forced choice. The complexities these things introduce are not the sort that will please a pure logician, since they are likely to limit rather than enlarge the range of interesting formal operations. We are concerned here, however, only with producing an adequate formal and systematic representation of the normative inferences we make in our ethics.

Notation and Interpretation

For practical purposes we can avoid most of the complexities of predicate logic. In effect, we can deal with atomic propositions, manipulated by truth functional, normative, and modal operators, where first-order predicate language is used merely to indicate some important content distinctions in a perspicuous way. These distinctions could in principle be made with an array of propositional constants. All propositional and predicate variables are understood to be descriptive rather than prescriptive or normative. We will insist that any predicate or atomic proposition with buried modal or normative content be stated in a normal form in

which modal or normative operators are never placed inside the scope of quantifiers. For example, we will insist that the normative implications of statements of institutional fact (“Here is a dollar”) be extracted, as it were, and restated as normative operations over statements of brute fact (e.g., about what can or ought to be done with certain pieces of paper). (See Searle, “How to Derive Ought from Is.”)

Notation

The notation is as follows. *Propositional* variables p, q, r, \dots ; *Predicate* constants $A, B, \dots U$, and variables X, Y, Z, \dots ; *Individual* constants $a, b, \dots u$, and variables x, y, z ; existential and universal *Quantifiers* ($\exists x$), (x); *Truth functional* operators: \sim for negation, \vee for the inclusive disjunction “either p or q or both,” $\underline{\vee}$ for the exclusive disjunction “either p or q but not both,” $\&$ for the conjunction “and,” \supset for the material conditional “if p then q ,” \equiv for the material biconditional “ p if and only if q ”; *Punctuation*: $(,), [,], \{, \}$... *Modal* operators, \square, \diamond , read respectively as “It is necessary that ... , It is possible that ...”; *Normative* operators R, O, I , read respectively as “It is required that ... , It ought to be that ... , It is a matter of indifference that ...”; *Ordinal* operators $<, < >, >$, \leq, \geq , read respectively as “that ... is subordinate to that ... ,” “that ... is coordinate with that ... ,” etc.

Some additional twists are needed in the modal and normative vocabulary, due to the fact that possibilities and norms of different sorts have to be ordered (e.g., logical, theoretical, practical possibilities; moral, legal, social norms). Thus subscripts $_L$ for logical, $_T$ for theoretical, and $_P$ for practical will sometimes be added to modal operators. N.B.: When an alphabetic subscript is not given, the operator is shorthand for the disjunction of all the subscripts. Thus $\sim \diamond p$ stands for $(\sim \diamond_L p \vee \sim \diamond_T p \vee \sim \diamond_P p)$. For normative operators, numerical subscripts (e.g., R_1, O_2, I_n) indicate that the norm referred to is drawn from restricted, submoral considerations (etiquette, role obligations, etc.). The subscripts indicate the ordinal status of that *type* of norm relative to other submoral considerations. Priorities among norms of the same type or rank will be indicated with ordinal operators—e.g., $R_2 p > R_2 q$.) The subscript letter $_t$ will be used to identify norms that arise from transactions between individuals. Normative operators without numerical subscripts are understood to refer to moral (ethical) norms. Thus, given the stoic account of the moral point of view as the most inclusive possible sort of practical reasoning, we will read unsubscripted normative operators as “All-things-considered, it is required that ... ,” etc.

Interpretation

This logic diverges sharply from standard presentations of deontic logic in which the normative operators are obligation, permission, and prohibition—all interpreted in terms of the alethic modal notions of necessity, possibility, and impossibility. Instead we use normative operators of requirement, ought, and indifference, and it seems unlikely that the (informal) interpretation of them can be represented more formally in the noble semantics of alethic modal logic. Further discussion of this matter, and about the choice of these operators, is given in the commentary to this appendix and (implicitly) throughout chapter 5.

Ought. To say that it ought to be the case that s does (or is) c in e is to say that s 's doing (or being) c in e is *advisable*—that is, is an element in the process of pursuing the endeavor e that advances the enterprise along a defined trajectory toward its goals. Endeavors are intentional, goal-directed activities. Some things we do in pursuit of them are, as we say, steps in the right direction—on track, on course, on target, in accord with what we are trying to do, true to our purposes, right, correct—in a word, advisable. Other things are *inadvisable*, in the sense that they are deviations from the defined trajectory. Still others are neither advisable nor inadvisable with respect to e , in the sense that they have no effect on our progress along the trajectory. Note that, as in navigation, deviations from a defined course do not necessarily prevent reaching one's destination. One can make course corrections to get back on the original path, or one can chart a new course. Moreover, to say that an act is correct is not to say that it is unique in that regard (there may be several correct solutions to a given navigational problem), or that it is the optimal choice (one correct solution may be preferable to another).

Requirement. To say that it is required that s do (or be) c in e is to say that doing or being c is a necessary condition for pursuing e , or that $\sim c$ is a nullity in e , or that it is correct, in e , to sanction s for doing or being $\sim c$. (We include nullity as an alternative to make note of the cases in which the failure or “sanction” attendant to $\sim c$ comes from the fact that it does not count for anything in e . Legal requirements that a will be witnessed are of this sort. Failing to meet them is just failing to make a valid will. This is a special case of the “necessary condition” alternative, but one that is frequently forgotten.) For present purposes we do not think this triple disjunction needs to be broken apart to identify two or three different sorts of requirement. (It is clear that it could be parsed if need be, however, and that the types of requirement could be rank ordered.) Note that its being *required* that s do c in e is quite distinct from its being the case that s *ought* to do c . Requirements often constrain or even frustrate the pursuit of a goal.

Indifference. The indifference operator is interpreted as a logical remainder. To say that it is a matter of indifference that s does c in e is to say that s 's doing c is neither required, prohibited, advisable, or inadvisable in e . Note that it is not otherwise interdefinable with requirement and ought, however. See "Definitional Equivalence" below.

There are important and interesting logical relationships between these normative operators and the various sorts of imperatives, endorsements, recommendations, exclamations, and other speech acts typical of ethical discourse. Imperatives, for example, often elide the distinction between requirement and ought. ("Just do it" is ambiguous in that way.) And it is not clear that the distinction between categorical and hypothetical imperatives resolves the matter. See "Normative Constructs" below. It is also challenging to try to think through the extent to which the meaning of prescriptive language in general overlaps that of the normative propositions used here. We leave all such matters for another time.

The logic of the descriptive bases for normative propositions, both modal and nonmodal, is straightforwardly two-valued here. Such propositions are interpreted as either true or false. That means that modal logic will be treated as merely an extension of propositional logic, in which the modal propositions are interpreted by means of quantifiers (Feys, *Modal Logics*, 27–30). The logic of normative propositions, however, will be treated as three-valued in the following sense. We will say that a normative proposition is *sound* if it is either an axiom, a theorem, or a construct from a true descriptive basis. (A construct is a normative proposition whose normative form is derived from a descriptive basis by rules of inference. See "Normative Constructs.") We will say that a normative proposition is *unsound* if it is constructed from a false basis, or if its negation is a theorem or a construct from a true basis. The need for a third value arises from the fact that people frequently must come to conclusions about what they ought to do without being able to determine the truth or falsity of the relevant descriptive bases and therefore cannot extract or construct norms at all, or in situations where normative propositions conflict. Normative logic must be able to represent inferences for those sorts of situations. We will say that a proposition is *normatively open* if no normative operators range over it, or if its normative elements are either incoherent (conflict at the same ordinal level) or indeterminate (e.g., a requirement that one choose between unranked options).

A proposition $\Box_L w$ asserts a logical necessity—that is, it asserts that w is a tautology. $\sim\Diamond_L w$ asserts that w is self-contradictory. All the space between those poles is the area of logical possibility. What is logically possible, however, may not be possible in terms of our theories of the way things work. Einsteinian physics holds that travel at speeds greater than that of light is not possible; Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral

development holds that people cannot reach stage 6 without going through stages 1–5 in order. So a proposition $\sim\Diamond_1 w$ asserts a theoretical impossibility—that is, it asserts that w is logically inconsistent with the laws, postulates, predictions, or explanations of a given theory. The range of practical possibility is defined by the abilities of given individuals in given circumstances. So a proposition $\Diamond_p w$ asserts that w is logically consistent with the abilities of the people in some referenced class. Note that theoretical and practical possibility are merely context-restricted forms of logical possibility.

Basic Definitions, Rules, and Axioms

This section assembles, and modifies as necessary, some basic elements of propositional, predicate, and modal calculi. Most of the specifically stoic elements are given in the separate sections “Normative Constructs” and “Axioms of Stoic Normative Logic” below. There are, however, some adjustments in the materials of this section that should be noted.

Well-Formed Formulas

Our otherwise standard definition of a well-formed formula (wff) has only two unusual elements. One is the restriction on the scope of quantifiers introduced in rules 3, 4, and 5. This restriction is merely meant to avoid some well-known technical complications, and its use here is philosophically innocent. The restriction on normative operators introduced in rule 4 is a different matter, however. It is as far from innocence as it is from elegance. Rather, it is meant to capture some matters about norms argued for at length in chapter 5—namely, that they are all facts about the purposive activities of individual agents. As the commentary to this appendix points out, however, rule 4 may be too restrictive. An alternative is proposed there.

1. Any individual propositional variable or constant is a well-formed formula (wff).
2. Any predicate constant or variable that is bound with individual constants or quantified variables is a wff.
3. If anything w is a wff, then $\sim w$, $\Box w$, or $\Diamond w$ is a wff, provided no quantifiers in it range over \Box , \Diamond , **R**, **O**, or **I**.
4. If anything w is a wff, and if Rw , Ow , or Iw is a construct as defined in the section “Normative Constructs” below, then Rw , Ow , or Iw is a wff, provided no quantifiers in it range over \Box , \Diamond , **R**, **O**, or **I**.

5. If anything w is a wff, and if anything y is a wff, then $w \vee y$, $w \& y$, $w \supset y$, $w \equiv y$, $w < y$, $w < > y$, $w > y$, $w \leq y$, or $w \geq y$ is a wff, provided no quantifiers range over any \square , \diamond , **R**, **O**, or **I** within w or y .
6. Nothing is a wff unless its being so follows from rules 1–5.

Rules of Inference for Propositional, Quantificational, and Modal Logic

We use rules adapted from the Russell-Bernays system for the propositional calculus as found in Hilbert and Ackerman, *Principles of Mathematical Logic*, and Quine's approach to first-order quantification as found in Feys, *Modal Logics* (22).

Definitional Replacement. Definitionally equivalent expressions may replace one another without restriction.

Substitution. In a given formula, any wff whatsoever may be substituted for a given propositional variable, provided the substitution is made for every occurrence of the variable in the formula and does not introduce quantifiers that range over modal or normative operators.

Detachment. If any wff of the form $w \supset y$ is an axiom, theorem, or construct, and if w standing alone is an axiom, theorem, or construct, then y standing alone is a theorem or construct.

Generalization. If any wff of the form w is an axiom, theorem, or construct, then $(x)w$ standing alone is a theorem or construct, provided it does not range over modal or normative operators.

Modality. If any wff of the form w is an axiom or theorem, then $\square w$ standing alone is a theorem.

Axioms of Propositional and Quantificational Logic

For the standard propositional calculus, we will adopt the axioms of the Russell-Bernays system, as found in Hilbert and Ackerman, *Principles of Mathematical Logic*.

- I. $\vdash (p \vee p) \supset p$
- II. $\vdash p \supset (p \vee q)$
- III. $\vdash (p \vee q) \supset (q \vee p)$
- IV. $\vdash (p \supset q) \supset [(r \vee p) \supset (r \vee q)]$

For the first-order predicate calculus we will use Quine's axioms, as found in Feys, *Modal Logics* (22). Expressing them as metalogical schemata eliminates the need to elaborate the rule of **Substitution** above.

$$\text{V. } \vdash (x) (P \supset Q) \supset [(x)P \supset (x)Q]$$

$$\text{VI. } \vdash (x) [(y)P] \supset (y) [(x)P]$$

Axioms of Modal Logic

Since we will not venture into the project of constructing an account of entailment (strict implication), we will not need any of the special axioms of the various systems of modal logic devoted to it. We will, however, follow Feys, *Modal Logics* (32), in adopting two axioms to make this variant of modal logic deductively equivalent to its analog in the propositional calculus.

$$\text{VII. } \vdash \Box (p \supset q) \supset (\Box p \supset \Box q)$$

$$\text{VIII. } \vdash \Box p \supset p$$

Moreover, we will firmly decline analogous axioms for normative logic. Axiom VIII is clearly false when a normative operator replaces \Box , since it surely does not follow from the proposition that "it is required that s undertakes c in e," that "s undertakes c in e." The normative counterpart to Axiom VII is no better.

Definitional Equivalence

Standard rules for the interdefinability of truth functional and modal operators hold here: $w \supset y$ may be written as $\sim w \vee y$, $\Box w$ may be written as $\sim \Diamond \sim w$, etc. Quantifiers are interdefinable in the usual way: $(\exists x)Fx$ may be written as $\sim(x)\sim(Fx)$, $(\exists x)\sim(Fx)$ may be written as $\sim(x)(Fx)$, and so on. For ordinal operators, the translations are also routine. If w is superordinate to y , then it is not the case that it is either coordinate with it or subordinate to it. So $w > y$ may be written as $\sim(w \leq y)$, $w < > y$ may be written as $\sim[(w < y) \vee (w > y)]$, and so on.

For normative operators, the situation is more complex. For one thing, interdefinability operates only within a given ordinal level. Being required to do p by the rules and customs of chess ($\mathbf{R}p$) is identical to being forbidden to do $\sim p$ by those rules ($\mathbf{R}\sim p$), but it is not identical to being

forbidden, *all-things-considered*, to do $\sim p$. Rewriting across ordinal levels can only be done by inference, not by translation rules for the operators.

Moreover, even within a given level there is an implicit rank order that blocks simple interdefinability of the operators. There is an obvious conceptual connection between R_p and O_p , but the latter is a weaker normative statement than the former. It might, for example, express an ideal rather than a requirement. (“You really ought to take Greek, even though it isn’t required.”) So the two are not interchangeable. Moreover, though $\sim O_p$ (it is not the case that one ought to do p) is quite distinct from $O\sim p$ (one ought to do $\sim p$), and both deny O_p , neither can be rewritten as forbidding or requiring either p or $\sim p$.

It is tempting to suppose that each normative operator has an “eliminative” equivalent within a given ordinal level, however, since the three of them jointly exhaust the normative possibilities within that level. For example, to say that p is a matter of indifference is to say that it is neither required nor forbidden, neither something one ought to do or ought not to do. It is interpreted as a normative remainder. See “Interpretation” above. Thus we might be tempted to think that I_p is definitionally equivalent to $\sim(R_p \vee O_p \vee O\sim p)$. What this misses, however, is the possibility that the normative status of p might be open—that is, that no normative operator might be attached to it at all. In this logic, normative propositions are “constructed” from descriptive ones by way of rules of inference, so all we have asserted with $\sim(R_p \vee O_p \vee O\sim p)$ is that *if* p is a normative construct, it is I_p . Thus the relationship between I_p and $\sim(R_p \vee O_p \vee O\sim p)$ is an inferential one, not a matter of definitional equivalence. From I_p , one can infer $\sim(R_p \vee O_p \vee O\sim p)$, but not the other way around. (See “Immediate Inferences” below.) Some analogous inferences hold for R and O .

There is, however, one definitional equivalence worth noting in the normative domain. To say that p is a matter of indifference is to say that neither p nor $\sim p$ is either required, forbidden, or something one ought or ought not to do. Thus I_w may be written as $I\sim w$, and vice versa.

Proof, Consistency, and Completeness

A theorem is a proposition derived from axioms by rules of inference. A construct is a normative proposition whose normative form is derived from a descriptive basis or modal proposition by rules of inference. A proof of a normative proposition is a finite series of wffs, the first of which is an axiom, theorem, or descriptive basis, each successive wff of which is derived by the rules of inference from its immediate predecessor, and the last wff of which is a nonopen normative proposition.

Proof of the consistency of this system of normative logic can be accomplished by showing (1) that for any descriptive or modal proposition w , it is not possible to prove both w and $\sim w$, and (2) that any pair of normative propositions w and $\sim w$ will yield a superordinate normative proposition without conflicting elements. The first step is not problematic, since the consistency of the standard bivalent propositional and quantificational logic used here is well known. The second step is also unproblematic, given the rules of Escalation and Transcendence and the Axiom of Closure. (See “Normative Constructs” and “Axioms of Stoic Normative Logic” below.)

We happily leave the question of the completeness of the system to logicians. The completeness of standard bivalent propositional and first-order quantificational logic, and the seemingly innocuous way in which this logic of norms attaches to them, give us hope for a proof, but we do not have one.

Normative Constructs

The rules for constructing well-formed normative propositions are of four sorts: (1) rules governing the construction of first-order normative propositions from descriptive bases, (2) rules governing the ranking of normative propositions within a given ordinal level, (3) rules governing the construction of normative propositions of ordinal level $n + 1$ from normative propositions of level n , and (4) rules governing the construction of normative propositions without ordinal subscripts (moral ones) from normative propositions of any level n .

(1) *First-Order Constructs*

Certain constellations of facts, necessities, and possibilities license the construction of normative propositions. There is no sleight of hand in this process. Given facts about the rules of a game, for example, and facts about the possibilities open to players, it is plain how we can legitimately construct normative propositions about what the players ought to do *strictly in terms of the game they are playing*. And it is equally plain how we can then reconstruct such normative propositions in terms of the players’ more comprehensive activities—by enlarging the frame of reference to include facts about the various aims and preferences that have brought them to play the game, and the terms under which they are willing to stay in it. The normative power of such propositions is conditional: *if* we restrict ourselves simply to the rules of the “game” we are playing and the possibilities open to us, *then* we ought to . . .

All the licit normative constructs in this logic are conditional in that sense—they are all constructed from (and thus logically tethered to) antecedents that define an ongoing activity, its participants, and their possibilities. If the antecedent conditions are all-things-considered ones—that is, if the antecedent ongoing activity in terms of which the normative judgment is constructed is simply all-things-considered practical reasoning applied to a given situation—then such constructs have some similarity to categorical imperatives. This is so because, by definition, there is no way to reconstruct all-things-considered judgments in terms of antecedents that have not been considered. Thus in effect they have the sort of finality claimed for categorical imperatives (see Becker, “The Finality of Moral Judgments”).

The classic stoic injunction to “follow nature” is thus realized here as following the facts. We begin with the rules for transforming descriptive propositions about the aims, rules of play, and practical possibilities within a given ongoing activity into normative propositions about those activities. This is the process of extracting the normative content of “institutional facts” mentioned earlier. In each case, the inferences are to first-order normative propositions.

From means and ends to norms. For stoics, means/end reasoning is the underlying form of all practical reasoning. It is implicit even in apparently noninstrumental inferences from desires or categorical commitments, for example, because those inferences depend on assumptions about their connection to eudaimonia, human happiness, or flourishing. And there is no *practical* reasoning about that end, as opposed to a philosophical defense of it. It is an axiom of the system. However, it would not be instructive, in a normative logic, to represent all inferences simply in terms of means/end relationships. That would obscure many important distinctions. Here we will treat means/end inferences on a par with those about desires, commitments, appropriateness, and so forth.

Such means/end inferences at a given ordinal level take several forms, depending on the possibilities for action. One is what we may call the rule of the best means: if we can identify some course of action or trait *c* as a practically possible means to achieving one or more of the goals we are pursuing, and it is the best of the practical possibilities, then *nothing-else-considered*, we ought to do *c*. (This also covers the case in which *c* is the only available means.) Translating this into something closer to our notation, we may say that if *e* is an Endeavor for agent *s*, and *g* is a Goal of *e*, and *c* is a course of conduct or state of being that is a practically possible Means by which *s* can achieve *g*, and there is no other Means by which *s* can achieve *g* that is equal to or superordinate to *c*, then *s* ought to Undertake to do or be *c* in *e*. Note that we do not allow the construction of a normative requirement from these facts. If the goal involved is

an optional one, a requirement to pursue it does not follow merely from the fact that there is a best way, or even only one way, to do so. Thus:

The Best Means

$$\{eEs \ \& \ gGe \ \& \ \diamond_p(cMsg) \ \& \ [\sim(\exists x) (xMsg) \ \& \ (x \geq c)]\} \ / \cdot \ O_1(sUce)$$

That leaves the cases in which there are several routes to the same goal, none superior to the others. In such cases, though we need to avoid the indecision of Buridan's ass, the choice is arbitrary. So we will resolve such cases with an inference that the agent ought to make an arbitrary choice between the means. Thus the rule of multiple means is this: if *e* is an Endeavor for agent *s*, and *g* is a Goal of *e*, and *c* is a practically possible Means by which *s* can achieve *g*, and *b* is another (coordinate) Means by which *s* can achieve *g*, then (again, nothing-else-considered), *s* ought to make an Arbitrary choice between *c* and *b*.

Multiple Means

$$\{eEs \ \& \ gGe \ \& \ \diamond_p(cMsg) \ \& \ [(bMsg) \ \& \ (b < > c)]\} \ / \cdot \ O_1(sAcb)$$

Inferences to the conclusion that we ought not to do *c* may of course arise from our other endeavors, or from considerations of desire, commitment, and so forth. Such conflicts must be resolved with inferences to self-consistent superordinate normative propositions.

From desires to norms. In some endeavors the desires of the participants are allowed to trump all other considerations; the mere desire to do (or be) *c* counts as a sufficient reason for doing or being *c*, nothing-else-considered. Improvised games come to mind as an example—games in which the shifting whims of the players are allowed to overturn any of the rules, so that what begins as (say) a backyard game of croquet can mutate first into a test of love and then into an indefinite range of games that are not croquet. In other endeavors, desires are subordinate to certain considerations (e.g., efficiency) but are otherwise defined as sufficient reasons for action. And it may be that in still other endeavors, a desire to do *c* never counts as sufficient reason for doing it—or even counts as sufficient reason for *not* doing it.

We may represent these situations together in the following rule of inference: if *e* is an Endeavor for agent *s*, and *d* is a Desire of *s* to do or be *c* in *e*, and *d* is a Sufficient reason in *e* for *s* to Undertake *c*, then (nothing-else-considered) *s* ought to Undertake to do or be *c* in *e*. In our notation, this is

Desires

$$(eEs \ \& \ dDsc \ \& \ dSesc) \ / \cdot \ O_1(sUce)$$

Again, of course, desires can conflict, or conflict with other sorts of considerations.

From commitments to norms. A given endeavor, practice, or institution may define participants as categorically committed to various courses of action merely from the fact of their being participants in the endeavor. Such commitments are categorical in the sense that within the endeavor they are not conditioned on anything but participation—not on the desires or goals of individual participants, or the consequences of the required acts, for example. Such commitments are not optional within the endeavor. If e is an Endeavor for agent s , and c is defined as a Commitment for s in e , then (nothing-else-considered) s is required to Undertake to do or be c in e . Thus:

Commitments

$$(eEs \ \& \ cCse) / \therefore \mathbf{R}_1(sUce)$$

From standards to norms. Many endeavors have standards of good form and appropriateness that fall short of the requiredness of categorical commitments but are nonetheless important practical considerations. Such endeavors have an etiquette as well as a set of goals, an aesthetic as well as a set of commitments, a conception of what is fitting as well as a conception of what is effective. When we disapprove of an admittedly licit and effective practice as ugly, uncouth, or tacky—or commend a failure as classy—we appeal to such standards. They are not typically employed, however, to identify a particular course of action or way of being that must or ought to be pursued. Rather they are employed to assess conduct or character in terms of some threshold of objectionability. Such appeals may be represented in a rule of inference about things we ought *not* to do or be—a rule of this general form: if e is an Endeavor for agent s , and c is defined as Standard or fitting conduct or character for s in e , then (nothing-else-considered) s ought not to Undertake to do or be anything other than c in e . Thus:

Appropriateness

$$(eEs \ \& \ cSse) / \therefore \sim \mathbf{O}_1(sU\sim ce)$$

From ideals to norms. Appeals to standards of excellence, or to ideals for conduct and character, may be represented straightforwardly. They are not requirements, but they do identify a specific standard of conduct or character as something we ought to achieve. Thus if e is an Endeavor for agent s , and c is Ideal conduct or character for s in e , then (nothing-else-considered) s ought to Undertake to do or be c in e .

Ideals

$$(eEs \ \& \ cIse) / \therefore O_1(sUce)$$

From transactions to norms. Many endeavors define ways in which participants can create commitments, standards, and ideals for themselves within the endeavor. Obligations are sometimes distinguished from duties in this way by saying that while both are requirements, duties are imposed by the structure of the endeavor and obligations arise from voluntary transactions, such as contracts, within it. Whether a commitment, standard, or ideal is structural or transactional is sometimes normatively important in a given endeavor in a way that can be represented as a fact about its ordinal status. The nontransactional duty not to murder, for example, may make murder-for-hire contracts void, while certain ordinary duties of care (say, not to hit a baseball into a crowd) may be voided by the voluntary assumption of risk in coming to an organized baseball game. So we must have a way of representing the difference between these sources of commitments. Let us say that if *e* is an Endeavor for agent *s*, and *t* is a Transaction in *e* that Generates commitment *c* for *s*, then *s* is *transactionally* required to Undertake to do or be *c* in *e*. We will represent the transactional source of the norm with the subscript _{*t*}. (Normative operators without _{*t*} will be understood as nontransactional or “structural.”)

Transactional Commitments

$$(eEs \ \& \ cCse \ \& \ tTe \ \& \ tGcs) / \therefore R_t(sUce)$$

For standards, or fittingness: if *e* is an Endeavor for agent *s*, and *t* is a Transaction in *e* that Generates a Standard of fittingness *c* for *s*, then *transactionally*, *s* ought not to Undertake to do or be anything other than *c* in *e*.

Transactional Standards

$$(eEs \ \& \ cSse \ tTe \ \& \ tGcs) / \therefore \sim O_t(sU\sim ce)$$

And for ideals: if *e* is an Endeavor for agent *s*, and *t* is a Transaction in *e* that Generates an Ideal *c* for *s*, then *transactionally* *s* ought to Undertake to do or be *c* in *e*.

Transactional Ideals

$$(eEs \ \& \ cIse \ \& \ tTe \ \& \ tGcs) / \therefore O_t(sUce)$$

From amendments to norms. Practical reasoning about changing the nature of a given endeavor also needs special attention. Some endeavors have explicit or implicit rules for transforming themselves—for making changes in their own goals, commitments, standards, ideals, transactional rules, the definition of a participant, and so forth. Let us call such changes amendments. We can represent such reasoning as follows: if e is a given Endeavor, f is a given Factor or element of e , and g is a licit amendment to f in e , then g Replaces f in e .

Amendments

$$(eEs \ \& \ fFe \ \& \ gDfe) \ / \cdot \ R_1(gRfe)$$

(2) Ranking Same-Level, Same-Endeavor Norms

Conflicts between norms constructed from different endeavors must be settled by the rules in section (5) below. Here we deal with conflicts that occur within a given endeavor at the same ordinal level. Because $\mathbf{R} > \mathbf{O} > \mathbf{I}$ here, the rules for resolving some of those conflicts are straightforward.

Requirements and oughts. If an agent s is required to do c in e but (from other considerations within the endeavor) ought to do b , and undertaking both is logically or theoretically or practically impossible, then the requirement dominates the ought.

Requirements over Oughts

$$R_n(sUce) \ \& \ O_n(sUbe)$$

$$\sim \diamond(sUce \ \& \ sUbe)$$

$$\ / \cdot \ R_n(sUce) > O_n(sUbe)$$

Requirements and indifference. If an agent s is required to do c in e but (from other considerations within the endeavor) b is a matter of indifference, and undertaking both is logically or theoretically or practically impossible, then the requirement dominates the indifference.

Requirements over Indifference

$$R_n(sUce) \ \& \ I_n(sUbe)$$

$$\sim \diamond(sUce \ \& \ sUbe)$$

$$\ / \cdot \ R_n(sUce) > I_n(sUbe)$$

Oughts and indifference. If an agent s ought to do c in e but (from other considerations within the endeavor) b is a matter of indifference, and undertaking both is logically or theoretically or practically impossible, then the ought dominates the indifference.

Oughts over Indifference

$$O_n(sUce) \ \& \ I_n(sUbe)$$

$$\sim \diamond(sUce \ \& \ sUbe)$$

$$\therefore O_n(sUce) > I_n(sUbe)$$

Conflicting norms of the same type. Within an endeavor at ordinal level n , there may be conflicts between requirements, between oughts, or between judgments about indifference in cases where it is logically or theoretically or practically impossible to carry out all the norms. The norms in such conflicts may or may not be coordinate. Coordinate conflicting requirements or oughts are replaced by a judgment of indifference together with a requirement to choose. Coordinate conflicting indifferences generate a requirement to choose. (Such open propositions generate a determinate result at ordinal level $n + 1$. See section (3) below.)

Coordinate Conflicting Requirements

$$R_n(sUce) \ \& \ R_n(sUbe)$$

$$R_n(sUce) < > R_n(sUbe)$$

$$\sim \diamond(sUce \ \& \ sUbe)$$

$$\therefore I_n(sUce) \ \& \ I_n(sUbe) \ \& \ R_n[(sUce) \vee (sUbe)]$$

Coordinate Conflicting Oughts

$$O_n(sUce) \ \& \ O_n(sUbe)$$

$$O_n(sUce) < > O_n(sUbe)$$

$$\sim \diamond(sUce \ \& \ sUbe)$$

$$\therefore I_n(sUce) \ \& \ I_n(sUbe) \ \& \ R_n[(sUce) \ \vee \ (sUbe)]$$

Coordinate Conflicting Indifference

$$I_n(sUce) \ \& \ I_n(sUbe)$$

$$I_n(sUce) < > I_n(sUbe)$$

$$\sim \diamond (sUce \ \& \ sUbe)$$

$$\therefore R_n[(sUce) \ \vee \ (sUbe)]$$

If the norms are not coordinate, the superordination relation simply falls through into the conclusion. (For the sake of economy, only half of each rule has been written out. In each case, of course, the conclusion changes in an obvious way if the ordinal relationship of the conflicting norms is reversed.)

Superordinate Conflicting Requirements

$$R_n(sUce) \ \& \ R_n(sUbe)$$

$$R_n(sUce) \ > \ R_n(sUbe)$$

$$\sim \diamond (sUce \ \& \ sUbe)$$

$$\therefore R_n(sUce) \ > \ R_n(sUbe)$$

Superordinate Conflicting Oughts

$$O_n(sUce) \ \& \ O_n(sUbe)$$

$$O_n(sUce) \ > \ O_n(sUbe)$$

$$\sim \diamond (sUce \ \& \ sUbe)$$

$$\therefore O_n(sUce) \ > \ O_n(sUbe)$$

(3) *Escalation*

When normative propositions from different endeavors conflict at level n , we will represent the resolution of the conflict in terms of rules for generating normative propositions at level $n + 1$. We will do the same for forced choices—requirements at level n to choose between conflicting courses of conduct or states of being, either within or across endeavors. Let us call these the rules of escalation.

Escalation from endogenous rankings. The order $R > O > I$ does not hold across endeavors. A requirement generated by a party game, for example, does not typically dominate an ought generated by a rescue effort. Indeed, in practice a judgment of indifference from an enterprise that is taken seriously may trump a requirement from one that is not. Our logic would misrepresent such facts if it formulated dominance rules that were applicable to all conflicts across endeavors merely from the meanings of the operators considered alone. We must instead take care to represent the ordinal relationships between the endeavors.

Sometimes these ordinal relationships come from the endeavors themselves, in the sense that each one is defined as having (or lacking) certain priorities. Let us say that such priorities are *endogenous* when they arise in this way. (Idle chat, for example, is typically defined as interruptible for almost any reason. Its ordinal claims for itself are minimal.) If the various endogenous rankings for conflicting normative propositions at level n are identical and determinate, we may resolve the conflict at $n + 1$, as follows.

For example, if one endeavor defines its requirements as superordinate to those of another and the other agrees (i.e., defines its requirements as subordinate), then the rankings are identical and determinate. The rule of inference is this: if both e and f are Endeavors for agent s , and s is required at level n to Undertake both c in e and b in f , but although undertaking both is logically or theoretically or practically impossible, each endeavor Defines c as superordinate to b , then s ought, at level $n + 1$, to Undertake c in e . Note that this rule yields only an ought at $n + 1$. The fact that these endeavors agree that one of the requirements has priority over the other would be overstated if we escalated to a requirement at $n + 1$.

Superordination for Coincident Endogenous Rankings for Conflicting Requirements

$$eEs \ \& \ R_n(sUce)$$

$$fEs \ \& \ R_n(sUbf)$$

$$\sim \diamond (sUce \ \& \ sUbf)$$

$$R_n(sUce) > R_n(sUbf)$$

$$\therefore O_{n+1}(sUce)$$

and for conflicts between oughts, requirements and oughts, etc.

The rule applies, *mutatis mutandis*, for any ordering $>$ or $<$ of any norms (R, O, I) governing $sUce$ and $sUbf$.

When the various endogenous rankings agree that neither of the conflicting norms at level n dominates the other, they in effect agree that the choice between the norms is arbitrary. We will represent this by deriving norms of indifference at $n + 1$, coupled with a requirement to choose.

Equivalence for Coincident Endogenous Rankings for Conflicting Requirements

$$eEs \ \& \ R_n(sUce)$$

$$fEs \ \& \ R_n(sUbf)$$

$$\sim \diamond (sUce \ \& \ sUbf)$$

$$R_n(sUce) < > R_n(sUbf)$$

$$\therefore I_{n+1}(sUce) \ \& \ I_{n+1}(sUbf) \ \& \ R_{n+1}[(sUce) \ \vee \ (sUbf)]$$

for conflicts between oughts, requirements and oughts, etc.

The rule applies, *mutatis mutandis*, for any ordering $< >$ of any norms (R, O, I) governing sUce and sUbf.

When endogenous rankings are absent, or are not identical, or are indeterminate (i.e., \leq or \geq), conflicts must be resolved with the rules for exogenous rankings. See below.

Forced choice under indifference. Within or across endeavors, we sometimes face a requirement to choose between coordinate, thus indifferent, options. If various acts or states of being are matters of indifference at some normative level n , but it is required that we choose one or the other, then we will say that we ought, at level $n + 1$, to make an arbitrary choice between the two. (It is clear that the requirement to choose can be resolved with an ought, and since it does not matter which of the two oughts we adopt, it seems implausible to represent the resolution as a requirement to do the option we choose.) Thus if it is a matter of indifference at level n whether agent s Undertakes c in e , b in e , or b in f , but s is required to choose exactly one, then s ought at $n + 1$ to make an Arbitrary choice between c and b .

Forced Choice under Indifference within an Endeavor

$$I_n(sUce) \ \& \ I_n(>sUbe)$$

$$\sim \diamond (sUce \ \& \ sUbe)$$

$$R_n[(sUce) \ \vee \ (sUbe)]$$

$$\therefore O_{n+1}(sAcb)$$

and across endeavors

$$I_n(sUce) \ \& \ I_n(sUbf)$$

$$\sim \diamond (sUce \ \& \ sUbf)$$

$$R_n[(sUce) \ \vee \ (sUbf)]$$

$$\therefore O_{n+1}(sAcb)$$

Escalation from exogenous rankings. Each of us engages in a multitude of endeavors. We define some of these as embedded in more comprehensive

endeavors. For example, a game of Go Fish with a younger sister may be embedded in a babysitting operation for several siblings that controls when and how the game is played, and the babysitting may itself be controlled by more general filial obligations derived from family life. In such cases, when norms at level n conflict, those from the more comprehensive endeavor are elevated to level $n + 1$. Thus, for example, if both e and f are Endeavors for agent s , and s is required at level n to Undertake both c in e and b in f , but although undertaking both is logically or theoretically or practically impossible, endeavor e is defined as more Comprehensive than f for s , then s is required, at level $n + 1$, to Undertake c in e . Note that this rule preserves the normative operator from e , to represent the fact that e is the more comprehensive and controlling of the two endeavors for agent s . However, it leaves the less comprehensive norm intact at level n to represent the fact that the norm from f has not been altered but merely overridden in this case.

Comprehensiveness for Requirements

$eEs \ \& \ R_n(sUce)$

$fEs \ \& \ R_n(sUbf)$

$\sim \diamond (sUce \ \& \ sUbf)$

$eCfs$

$\therefore R_{n+1}(sUce)$

for other norms

The rule applies, *mutatis mutandis*, for any combination of norms. Whatever the norm from the more comprehensive and controlling of the endeavors at n , it escalates to $n + 1$ as a norm of the same type.

Exogenous rankings also arise from the fact that some of our endeavors are designed to assess or evaluate others. Judicial review, for example, assesses the constitutionality of statutes passed by legislatures. Peer review procedures in various professions assess the job performance of individuals. And within our own lives we regularly monitor and assess our own activities—in terms of their prudence, consequences for others, conformity to law, morality, religious doctrine, and so forth. When we adopt one endeavor as an assessment mechanism for other (target) endeavors, we use it to construct norms that are about those of its targets, and superordinate to them. We will represent that situation here by saying that when the norms of an assessment (or critical endeavor) conflict at level n with those of its target endeavor, the target's norms

are rejected, and the norms from the assessment (critique) are elevated to level $n + 1$.

Thus, for example, if both e and f are Endeavors for agent s , and s is required at level n to Undertake both c in e and b in f , but although undertaking both is logically or theoretically or practically impossible, endeavor e is defined as an exogenous aAssessment of f for s , then s is required, at level $n + 1$, to Undertake c in e .

Exogenous Assessment for Conflicting Requirements

$eEs \ \& \ R_n(sUce)$

$fEs \ \& \ R_n(sUbf)$

$\sim \diamond(sUce \ \& \ sUbf)$

$eSfs$

$\therefore R_{n+1}(sUce)$

for other norms

The rule applies, *mutatis mutandis*, for any combination of norms. Whatever conflicting norm emerges from the assessment endeavor at n escalates to $n + 1$ as a norm of the same type.

(4) *Transcendence*

By definitional convention in this logic, normative propositions representing practical reasoning all-things-considered are written (or may be rewritten) with unsubscripted normative operators and are interpreted as representing moral norms. Thus if endeavor e for s is an aAssessment, and e for s is Practical reasoning all-things-considered, and these things generate a normative proposition via the rule of exogenous assessment, then that normative proposition is unsubscripted.

Transcendent Assessment for Requirements

$eEs \ \& \ ePs \ \& \ R_n(sUce)$

$fEs \ \& \ R_n(sUbf)$

$\sim \diamond(sUce \ \& \ sUbf)$

$eSfs$

$\therefore R(sUce)$

The same holds for applications of the rule of comprehensiveness. Thus:

Transcendent Comprehensiveness for Requirements

$$eEs \ \& \ ePs \ \& \ R_n(sUce)$$

$$fEs \ \& \ R_n(sUbf)$$

$$\sim \diamond(sUce \ \& \ sUbf)$$

$$eCfs$$

$$\therefore R(sUce)$$

for other norms

The rule applies, *mutatis mutandis*, for any combination of normative propositions. Whatever the proposition from practical reasoning all-things-considered, it escalates to an unsubscripted one of the same type.

Forced moral choice. Conflicts among unsubscripted, coordinate normative propositions may force an arbitrary choice. When this happens, the requirement of an arbitrary choice has effectively become the more encompassing norm. We will resolve this state of affairs in a series of rules. For example, if it is impossible for *s* to do both *c* and *b*, in the same or different endeavors, and if both *c* and *b* are unsubscripted requirements for *s*, and there is an unsubscripted requirement that *s* do one or the other, then the forced-choice requirement generates a moral requirement to make an Arbitrary choice between the two.

Conflicting Moral Requirements

$$\sim \diamond(sUce \ \& \ sUbf)$$

$$R(sUce) \ \& \ R(sUbf)$$

$$RsUce \ < \ > \ RsUbf$$

$$R(sUce \ \vee \ sUbf)$$

$$\therefore R(sAcb)$$

If *c* and *b* are unsubscripted oughts that are jointly impossible to undertake, and a choice between them is forced, we get a moral requirement to make an Arbitrary choice between the two.

Conflicting Moral Oughts

$$\sim \diamond(sUce \ \& \ sUbf)$$

$$O(sUce) \ \& \ O(sUbf)$$

$$O_s U_{ce} < > O_s U_{bf}$$

$$R(sU_{ce} \vee sU_{bf})$$

$$\therefore R(sA_{cb})$$

If c and b are unsubscripted indifferences, and a choice is forced, we also get a moral requirement to make an Arbitrary choice.

Conflicting Moral Indifference

$$\sim \diamond (sU_{ce} \& (sU_{bf}))$$

$$I(sU_{ce}) \& I(sU_{bf})$$

$$I_s U_{ce} < > I_s U_{bf}$$

$$R(sU_{ce} \vee sU_{bf})$$

$$\therefore R(sA_{cb})$$

If it is a matter of indifference whether or not s Undertakes c in e, but a choice between undertaking c or $\sim c$ is forced, then a modified version of the rule of conflicting moral indifference applies. By definitional equivalence, $I(sU_{ce})$ may be written as $I\sim(sU_{ce})$, so we use the conjunction of them to represent the forced choice, which then generates a moral requirement for s to make an Arbitrary choice between c and $\sim c$.

Closure for Moral Indifference

$$\sim \diamond [(sU_{ce} \& \sim(sU_{ce}))]$$

$$I_s U_{ce} \& I\sim(sU_{ce})$$

$$R(sU_{ce} \vee \sim sU_{ce})$$

$$\therefore R(sA_{c\sim c})$$

Axioms of Stoic Normative Logic

Stoics add the following postulates specific to their ethical doctrines, which are given a metaethical defense in other chapters.

IX. Axiom of Encompassment. The exercise of our agency through practical intelligence, including practical reasoning all-things-considered, is the most comprehensive of our endeavors. That is, in every case, if endeavor x for agent s is the exercise of Agency through practical intelligence all-things-considered and endeavor y for s is not, then x is more Comprehensive than y for s.

$$\vdash (x) (y) [(xEs \& yEs \& xAs \& y\sim As) \supset xCy_s]$$

X. **Axiom of Finality.** There is no assessment endeavor exogenous to the exercise of practical reasoning all-things-considered. That is, in every case, if endeavor x for agent s is practical reasoning all-things-considered and endeavor y for s is not, then y is not an assessment mechanism for x for s .

$$\vdash (x) (y) [(xEs \ \& \ yEs \ \& \ xTs \ \& \ y\sim Ts) \supset y\sim Sys]$$

XI. **Axiom of Moral Priority.** Unsubscripted norms are superordinate to subscripted ones. To state this in a compact way without quantifying over normative operators, we will use a schema in which N stands for any normative operator, and P stands for a wff of any form. The schema asserts that NP is superordinate to N_nP .

$$\vdash NP > N_nP$$

XII. **Axiom of Moral Rank.** The order $R > O > I$ holds for unsubscripted (i.e., moral) normative propositions.

$$\vdash RP > OP > IP$$

XIII. **Axiom of Closure.** If no normative proposition at any level can be constructed for a given course of conduct or state of being (that is, if a situation is normatively open), the relevant proposition is closed with an unsubscripted ought-not. That is, if it is not the case that either a subscripted or unsubscripted normative operator N governs c for s in e , then s ought not to Undertake c in e .

$$\vdash \sim [N(sUce) \vee N_n(sUce)] \supset O\sim(sUce)$$

XIV. **Axiom of Futility.** If any norm represented by an atomic normative proposition, as opposed to a conjunction of them, is logically, theoretically, or practically impossible to carry out, it yields an unsubscripted prohibition. That is, if any normative operator N governs c for s in e , and it is logically or theoretically or practically impossible for s to Undertake c in e , then s is required not to Undertake c in e , and that requirement dominates the original norm.

$$\vdash [N(sUce) \ \& \ \sim \diamond(sUce)] \text{ I } R\sim(sUce) \ \& \ [R\sim(sUce) > N(sUce)]$$

Immediate Inferences

From stronger to weaker. Requirements and prohibitions at the same ordinal rank are equivalent in normative force or strength. Propositions about what ought to be done are weaker. (Indifference is a special case. In an obvious sense it is the weakest of the three, but it has some special powers that make a straightforward ranking problematic. See the inferences below.) Thus within a given ordinal level the following immediate inferences may be made a fortiori. That is, if we have proved the

stronger, we may immediately conclude that we have thereby also proved its weaker counterparts. Stating the premise first, followed by “therefore” (\therefore) and the conclusion, we have

$$R_n w \therefore O_n w$$

$$I_n w \therefore \sim O_n w \ \& \ \sim R_n w$$

From opposites. Two normative propositions at a given ordinal level are logical opposites if each member of the pair is a denial of the other. Aristotelian logic distinguishes two kinds of opposites: contradictories, which can be neither jointly true nor jointly false; and contraries, which cannot be jointly true but can be jointly false. Here we make the same distinction with respect to jointly sound or unsound pairs. (Inconsistent sets of atomic normative propositions form open, rather than sound or unsound, compounds.)

Contradictories

R_p and $\sim R_p$ cannot be either jointly sound or jointly unsound, so from R_p we may immediately infer $\sim(\sim R_p)$, and from $\sim R_p$ we may infer $\sim(\sim R_p)$. The same is true of O_p and $\sim O_p$, I_p and $\sim I_p$. These are not very interesting contradictories, since double negation is provable as a theorem in this system, and $\sim(\sim R_p)$ becomes R_p , etc. Slightly more interesting is the fact that I_p is the “complete” contradictory of both R_p and O_p —that is, it contradicts $R\sim p$ as well as R_p , and $O\sim p$ as well as O_p . So the following *reversible* immediate inferences are available:

$$I_n w \therefore \sim(R_n w), \text{ and vice versa}$$

$$I_n w \therefore \sim(R_n \sim w), \dots$$

$$I_n w \therefore \sim(O_n w), \dots$$

$$I_n w \therefore \sim(O_n \sim w), \dots$$

$$R_n w \therefore \sim(I_n w), \dots$$

$$R_n \sim w \therefore \sim(I_n w), \dots$$

$$O_n w \therefore \sim(I_n w), \dots$$

$$O_n \sim w \therefore \sim(I_n w), \dots$$

(Note that R_p and $R\sim p$, O_p and $O\sim p$, are contraries rather than contradictories. See below. Recall that I_p and $I\sim p$ are definitionally equivalent.)

Contraries

As is evident from the above, some pairs of normative propositions are contraries. That is, each denies the other, and while it remains logically possible for them both to be unsound, it is not logically possible for them both to be sound. \mathbf{R}_p and $\mathbf{R}\sim p$ conflict in this way, because although it is logically impossible to prove that p is *both* required and forbidden, it might be that p is neither required nor forbidden, but rather something we merely ought (or ought not) to do—or perhaps even a matter of indifference. The same logical contrariety holds between \mathbf{R}_p and $\sim\mathbf{O}_p$, $\mathbf{R}\sim p$ and \mathbf{O}_p , and \mathbf{O}_p and $\mathbf{O}\sim p$, because each inconsistent pair might be jointly false. Thus we have these *nonreversible* immediate inferences:

$$\mathbf{R}_n w / \therefore \sim(\mathbf{R}_n \sim w)$$

$$\mathbf{R}_n w / \therefore \sim(\mathbf{O}_n \sim w)$$

And:

$$\mathbf{R}_n \sim w / \therefore \sim(\mathbf{R}_n w)$$

$$\mathbf{R}_n \sim w / \therefore \sim(\mathbf{O}_n w)$$

And:

$$\mathbf{O}_n w / \therefore \sim(\mathbf{O}_n \sim w)$$

$$\mathbf{O}_n \sim w / \therefore \sim(\mathbf{O}_n w)$$

(Recall again that $\mathbf{I}_n w$ and $\mathbf{I}_n \sim w$ are definitional equivalents and thus not contraries.)

Commentary

For careful, lucid, and detailed accounts of the contributions of the ancient Stoics to the development of logic, with copious reference to the fragmentary texts, we now have the recent work by Suzanne Bobzien, “Logic,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, and its longer version in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*. Accounts available for the first edition included Benson Mates, *Stoic Logic*, and William Kneale and Martha Kneale, *The Development of Logic*.

For the texts themselves, with the usual illuminating commentary, see sections 31–38 of Long and Sedley’s *The Hellenistic Philosophers*. Note especially the discussions of the Stoics’ long misunderstood invention of propositional logic, their debates about conditionals (material and strict implication), their debates about necessity, and their statement of the conditionalization principle (that an argument is valid if we get a logical truth when we form a conditional whose antecedent is the conjunction of the argument’s premises and whose consequent is the argument’s conclusion). The Kneales’s book also puts Stoic logic into historical context.

This Normative Logic in Relation to Others

Vocabulary and notation. The normative operators used here are not the ones standardly found in deontic logic. There are some logicians who have proposed something like them. But most writers use prohibition, obligation, and permission rather than requirement, ought, and indifference. This is not a mere notational difference, and its significance will be discussed more fully below in the section on the modal approach to deontic logic. One wrinkle that deserves special mention now, however, is that here as in standard accounts the normative operators operate on descriptive sentences—propositions—rather than on verbs or verb phrases that identify actions or activity. This is indicated by the way the operators are read: **R** is read as “it is required that ——” where the blank is filled by a proposition. It is not read as “s is required to ——” where the blank is filled with a verb phrase. Some formidable logicians treat this distinction as an important one and claim standard deontic logic runs into difficulties here. (See Wright, “On the Logic of Norms and Actions,” 9ff.; Castañeda, “The Paradoxes of Deontic Logic: The Simplest Solution to All of Them in One Fell Swoop,” 40–41.) The examples designed to exhibit the difficulties, however, do not seem to embarrass the logic outlined here, largely due to our severe constraints on the construction of normative propositions. See the section below on construction.

Quantification and generality. While it is clear that normative operators can range over quantifiers unproblematically, logicians are quite cautious about the reverse. (See Wright, “On the Logic of Norms and Actions,” 32–33.) To be on the safe side, we do not allow any quantifiers to range over deontic operators. We use quantifiers in the descriptive components of normative propositions to define the range of agents or acts or circumstances covered by the norms involved.

The modal approach. At least as early as the fourteenth century, logicians noted similarities between the “alethic” modalities (impossibility, necessity, and possibility) and the normative concepts of prohibition, obligation, and permission.

(See Knuuttila, “The Emergence of Deontic Logic in the Fourteenth Century.”) Following out these similarities has been the standard approach to deontic logic in the latter half of the twentieth century, though the putative paradoxes of this strategy and its difficulties in representing the full complexity of moral life (particularly moral conflicts) have led to many refinements. Some of these, such as the attempt to anchor deontic logic in temporal concepts in Thomason, “Deontic Logic as Founded in Tense Logic,” we do not pursue here. Others, notably the use of hierarchies in resolving conflicts in Alchourrón and Makinson, “Hierarchies of Regulation and Their Logic,” we do pursue. But the greatest apparent difference between our normative logic and the standard modal approach is in the normative concepts we employ.

The standard modal approach maps obligation onto necessity and prohibition onto impossibility, leaving the alethic remainder of possibility to correspond to permission. We, on the other hand, do this:

1. We think of the normative notion of requirement as incompletely analogous to *two* alethic ones—necessity and impossibility. “It is required that *p*” represents the affirmative notions of duty and obligation, and its interpretation corresponds in a limited way to necessity. “It is required that not-*p*” represents the idea of prohibition, or of duty or obligation *not* to do something, and corresponds, again in a very limited way, to impossibility. The limitations of this interpretation are severe, however. As noted in the presentation of modal axioms, we do not accept their deontic analogs, and to refuse to extend those alethic truisms into the deontic realm is to limit the analogy at a very fundamental level. Moreover, we involve the notion of correctness in one disjunct of the interpretation of requirement: it is unclear how that would be interpreted in modal terms.

2. We employ an “ought” operator interpreted solely in terms of “advisability,” and it does not seem to correspond to any combination of modal ones, or to any logical operation on them. While falling short of stating obligations or duties, ought-statements represent conclusions about what it is right to do or be—conclusions constructed from the ends, values, ideals, and standards of our endeavors. So conceived, ought is a normative notion that falls immovably between requirement on the one side and the absence of a conclusive norm on the other.

3. The absence of a conclusive norm, which we call indifference, is equivalent to the joint denial of requirement and mere correctness. “It is indifferent that *p*” means *p* is neither required nor prohibited, and neither advisable nor inadvisable. In one sense this merely renames the standard deontic operator of permission, since it is natural to say, for example, that if it is a matter of normative indifference whether we do *b* or *c*, then both are permitted, and vice versa. But the ordinary concept of permission has some complexity that makes its use as a normative “remainder” inconvenient. In particular, the notion of permission (as in *having* permission) seems go beyond the mere joint denial of requirement and recommendation. So we do not try to equate indifference to permission. Indifference, however, does not map very well onto the modal notion of possibility. For one thing, necessity is typically understood to entail possibility: If $\Box p$, then $\Diamond p$. While there is a similar relation between what is affirmatively required and what is a fortiori permitted, there is obviously no such relation between requirement and indifference.

4. We take permission out of the realm of normative operators altogether and instead make its various forms into nonnormative predicates that represent the choice set available to an agent in the logical space defined by her possibilities and requirements. This avoids the controversies introduced by attempts to make a permission operator interdefinable with prohibition and obligation. (See Wright, “On the Logic of Norms and Actions,” 6.) Recall that one of the attractive features of the modal approach is supposed to be that the elegant interdefinability of modal operators is mirrored in deontic ones. Thus just as we need only one basic alethic modality plus negation to construct the others, and it does not matter which one we choose, so it has seemed to some that we need only one basic deontic modality. For example, on the alethic side if possibility is taken as the basic notion, then impossibility is its negation ($\sim\Diamond p$), and necessity is the impossibility of not- p ($\sim\Diamond\sim p$). Some have thought that an analogous thing holds for Permission to do p : Forbiddenness (prohibition) is simply its negation ($\sim Pp$), and Obligation is just the prohibition of not doing p ($\sim P\sim p$). The problem is that in this scheme, when forbiddenness is treated as basic, permission is defined as its negation ($\sim Pp$)—that is, simply as the absence of a prohibition. And that seems incapable of adequately representing the ordinary and juridical notions *being permitted* (having license) to do something.

These and other disanalogies with alethic modalities (Wright, “On the Logic of Norms and Actions,” 7ff.) make us wary of any version of the standard modal approach, though the startling suggestion in Schotch and Jennings, “Non-Kripkean Deontic Logic,” that alethic logic might be a special case of deontic logic is intriguing. In any case, given our interpretations of the ought and requirement operators, it appears that we cannot simply borrow the semantics of alethic modal logic for this normative one in any straightforward way. We are encouraged, moreover, in thinking that this will not be fatal to our project by some related (and more rigorous) attempts to provide alternative semantics for deontic logic. Though these efforts are typically directed to making room for notions of good, better, and best rather than precisely the norms we want to use, they often include something like our notions of indifference and ought and sometimes employ possible world semantics. For various aspects of such work, see Feldman, *Doing the Best We Can: An Essay in Informal Deontic Logic*; Hansson, “Preference-Based Deontic Logic”; and Goble, “A Logic of Good, Should, and Would,” parts I and II.

The paradoxes of standard deontic logic. The modal approach, while elegant in intent, has been a decidedly mixed blessing for deontic logic. In particular, two features of the standard logic that developed from Georg Henrik von Wright’s paper “Deontic Logic” generate counterintuitive or “paradoxical” results. One is an unrestricted rule of well-formedness that allows deontic operators to be affixed willy-nilly to any proposition that is well formed in the propositional or predicate calculus. Thus if anything p is a wff, so is Fp , Op , or Pp (it is Forbidden, Obligatory, or Permitted that p). The other troublesome feature is the variety of ways that one can derive, delete, and distribute modal operators, even in the weakest systems of modal logic, that cause problems when extended to deontic contexts. As noted in the text of this appendix, we certainly cannot accept the normative version of $\Box p \supset p$, which every system of modal logic contains. Similarly, the derivation of alethic propositions in $(p \supset q) \supset (\Box p \supset \Box q)$, leads to paradoxes of

“derived obligation” when O (or R) is substituted for \Box . (We surely do not want to say that just because q is a material consequence of p , a requirement that q is a material consequence of a requirement that p . Rather, we want to be able to hold that in some cases q is only an unfortunate, unintended consequence of a requirement that p .) More problems arise in the use of some distributive equivalences drawn from alethic modal logic, where these biconditionals for

Possibility: $\Diamond(p \vee q) \equiv \Diamond p \vee \Diamond q$

Impossibility: $\Box\sim(p \vee q) \equiv \Box\sim p \ \& \ \Box\sim q$

Necessity: $\Box(p \ \& \ q) \equiv \Box p \ \& \ \Box q$

are unproblematic. The corresponding deontic rules for

Permissibility: $P(p \vee q) \equiv Pp \vee Pq$

Forbiddenness: $F(p \vee q) \equiv Fp \ \& \ Fq$

Obligation: $O(p \ \& \ q) \equiv Op \ \& \ Oq$

are decidedly problematic, however. Even the weaker $(\Box p \ \& \ \Box q) \supset \Box(p \ \& \ q)$ leads to problems. (See Schotch and Jennings, “Non-Kripkean Deontic Logic.”)

Well-Formed Formulas

In the logic outlined in the appendix, the normative propositions that enter into inferences are understood to be constructed in accord with the rules given in the section “Normative Constructs.” To leave no doubt in the matter, we make such construction a rule of well-formedness. Recall that, in the appendix, rule 4 for wffs is

4. If anything w is a wff, and if Rw , Ow , or Iw is a construct as defined in the section “Normative Constructs” below, then Rw , Ow , or Iw is a wff, provided no quantifiers in it range over \Box , \Diamond , R , O , or I .

The so-called standard paradoxes of deontic logic thus do not arise here. For example in the propositional calculus, given p , we can infer $(p \vee q)$, but there is nothing embarrassing about that for normative propositions in this logic, since Rq cannot be a substitution instance of q in $p \supset (p \vee q)$ unless it is a normative construct. This blocks some of the well-known paradoxes of derived obligation. Further, since we do not expect our normative logic to mirror an alethic one, we need not be lumbered with the paradoxes that arise from its specifically modal axioms and theorems. We simply decline to import problematic modal elements into our normative logic. We do not doubt that some vexing technical problems will emerge to surprise us. Such things have plagued standard deontic logic for decades. See, for example, recent discussions of James Forrester’s “paradox of gentle murder,” which seems to follow from three ordinary-sounding premises: that (1) Jones ought not to murder Smith, but that (2) if Jones does so, he ought to do it gently (swiftly, painlessly), and regrettably (3) Jones does so. It then follows,

from (2) and (3), that (4) Jones ought to murder Smith gently. But that obviously conflicts with (1). (Readers who want to pursue the puzzle in the context of standard deontic logic will find it helpful to consult Forrester, “Gentle Murder, or the Adverbial Samaritan”; Sinnott-Armstrong, “A Solution to Forrester’s Paradox of Gentle Murder”; and Goble, “Murder Most Gentle: The Paradox Deepens.”) Our approach to all such puzzles is to resolve them with minor changes in the formalism where possible, but in any case to resolve them, even if that means imposing restrictions on something as fundamental as the rule of detachment.

Does this mean that the normative logic outlined in this appendix will be too weak to interest logicians? Perhaps. See, for example, Almeida, “Deontic Logic and the Possibility of Moral Conflict,” for arguments against weakened versions of deontic logic. But a more pressing concern at the moment is the question of whether rule 4 for wffs may be too strict (in addition to being too ugly). In the discussion of heteronomous norms (chapter 5), we say that although such norms are “outside the normative logic” of our agency because they are not constructed from facts about our endeavors, we nonetheless must acknowledge them as facts about our psychology. This suggests that our logic should be able to represent them in well-formed formulas. Perhaps the wiser course, then, would be to drop rule 4, and *rewrite* rule 3 as follows:

3. If anything w is a wff, then $\sim w$, $\Box w$, $\Diamond w$, $\mathbf{R}w$, $\mathbf{O}w$, or $\mathbf{I}w$ is a wff, provided no quantifiers in it range over \Box , \Diamond , \mathbf{R} , \mathbf{O} , or \mathbf{I} .

The embarrassments of the standard paradoxes would still be minimal, since only constructs can be used in the inferences defined as sound in the system.

Construction

The logic offered here is far from pure. In particular, its insistence that well-formed normative propositions (or at least those that are usable in sound inferences) be constructed from facts about the endeavors of individual agents is a restriction that logicians may find vexing. It seems to impoverish the logic by making it incapable of representing much everyday normative language. What are we to do with social norms, conventions, laws, signs that say “No Smoking,” and so on? Chapter 5 has more to say about this, but in brief, for philosophical reasons we insist on tethering all normative propositions to the purposive behavior of individual agents. So conventions are understood as facts about general norms that are shared by individuals. The “No Smoking” sign in the doctor’s office is her norm for everyone who enters, and it comes from some endeavor she is pursuing (say, the health of her patients, or her own comfort, or conforming to the expectations of others). People who work in the office may share the norm—either because they share the doctor’s endeavor or because they are pursuing another endeavor (keeping their jobs) that entails accepting it. It is true that this restatement of the meaning of a “No Smoking” sign takes us quite far from its meaning in ordinary speech or thought, where attention to metaphysical detail is often absent. And it is true that we want logic generally to be able to represent ordinary language so that it can represent philosophical arguments about the metaphysical assumptions in the ways we ordinarily speak and think. Standard assertoric and alethic logic seem capable of that, however. What we offer here is

a normative logic for ethics in the stoic tradition. Readers who insist that an adequate normative logic must be completely “neutral” between competing moral theories face severe difficulties. (See Sayre-McCord, “Deontic Logic and the Priority of Moral Theory.”)

Bivalence

The Stoics of antiquity were committed to bivalence. Readers may wonder how well the appendix honors that tradition. Normative propositions are interpreted as three-valued, here, in order to represent the “openness” that results from our inability to construct coherent sets of normative propositions at a given level n . Our view is that this is harmless as long as the rules and axioms force closure at $n + 1$ or better, but even so, we are sensitive to the pull of bivalence. James Cargile has reminded us in correspondence that there may be a way to interpret conflicting normative propositions perspectively so as to be able to state and resolve conflicts with the resources of standard bivalent logic. The idea, drawn from work on the paradoxes of standard deontic logic, would be to represent norms in more detailed propositional forms, always distinguishing them temporally (or perhaps in terms of the specific aspects of the endeavors from which they are drawn). (See Voorbraak, “The Logic of Actual Obligation: An Alternative Approach to Deontic Logic,” for discussion of some of this work.) We are not confident that this could be done in all cases (though it surely works for many), but we would like to see it pursued, so long as it does nothing to damage our ability to represent in the logic the contradictory motivational tugs of our ordinary practical experience. A related matter raised by Cargile illustrates our worry. He asks, about the meaning of “Nothing-else-considered, s ought to Undertake c in e ”: “Does this mean ‘If s does not consider anything else, then he ought etc.’, or is it rather ‘If s does not consider anything else then it will appear to s that he ought etc.’?” The answer is, we think, that it means both, and more. Nothing ontological is at stake here. The idea is simply to represent, in a perspicuous way, the norms operating in s ’s endeavors. If s is babysitting and playing a game with the child, two connected endeavors are being pursued simultaneously—endeavors that, described separately, may yield conflicting motivated norms for a given situation, such as an opportunity to take advantage of the child’s inexpert play. The rules of the game may be silent on this (or may require cutthroat play), while the babysitting enterprise requires something else, which for the babysitter may or may not dominate the playing of the game. So we say that playing the game per se, nothing-else-considered, requires c , but playing it as a babysitter with an inexpert child may require $\sim c$. We want to be able to represent the opposing motivations clearly present in some such situations.

The array of rules and axioms for propositional, predicate, and modal logic used here is a mixture drawn from several sources. Alfred North Whitehead and Bertrand Russell, in *Principia Mathematica*, originally proposed five axioms for the propositional calculus, but Paul Bernays (Hilbert and Ackermann, *Principles of Mathematical Logic*, 28) showed that the fifth, namely, $p \vee (q \vee r) \supset q \vee (p \vee r)$, was unnecessary. David Hilbert and Wilhelm Ackermann’s classic presentation of propositional and predicate logic gives two axioms for the predicate calculus, and two rules governing the use of quantifiers (68–70). This makes

certain things about the system nicely transparent, but it also makes it necessary to complicate the rule of substitution greatly. We have therefore followed Robert Feys's more streamlined presentation in his *Modal Logics*, which makes use of some elegant simplifications introduced by Willard Van Orman Quine. (See, for example, Quine, *Methods of Logic*, 89–94.)

Acknowledgments

A number of people read and thought carefully about early versions of this chapter and saved me from some egregious errors. My colleague Steven Harris identified a crucial use-mention error as well as errors in the use of quantifiers in the axioms. James Cargile and Mitchell Green each caught errors that infected all the rules of inference having to do with conflicting normative propositions, as well as the Axiom of Futility. Mitchell Green corrected my ignorance on several other matters and gave me valuable bibliographic advice. In particular, he encouraged me to read, rather than merely continue to stare at, several books that rested on my logic shelf. And he pressed me to explain the semantics of the normative operators used here in relation to modal ones. My thanks to all these people for taking an interest in this project.

Postscript to the Revised Edition

There are three matters that did not seem appropriate for inclusion in the text, commentaries, or preface but that nonetheless need to be included. *The first* is about the relation between this book and virtue ethics generally. On that issue I suggest below that virtue ethics should appropriate some version of stoic virtue ethics; incorporate it structurally. *The second* is the question of whether eudaimonistic virtue ethics—and specifically stoic virtue ethics—can be an adequate theoretical basis for social and political philosophy. I answer yes to that question and argue that stoicism has very powerful implications for social and political philosophy, including human rights. And *the third* is the charge that the book inexplicably fails to properly acknowledge the way in which stoicism can be a compelling practical guide to living well, especially in hard times. Against that charge I plead no contest.

The Virtues of Virtue Ethics in the Stoic Tradition

Part of my original intention for the first edition was to insert a discussion of stoicism into virtue ethics. Doing that required a detailed and plausible contemporary version of Stoic ethics, and the project of constructing that account essentially took over my original, underlying philosophical goal. I sent the manuscript off for publication without yet knowing whether it had advanced my understanding of ethical theory in general and virtue ethics in particular.

Beneficial effects, however, now appear in my subsequent work—some of it on stoicism, but most of it in another slowly developing project, this time on habilitation, basic good health, and basic justice (2012; 2016; 2017; 2017). And I see how my earlier work on virtue ethics, dating back to 1973, could have been significantly improved by an appreciation of the possibilities of stoic virtue ethics. No doubt I have also been influenced by the fact that working in the stoic tradition (as understood in this book) has the following four features that fit nicely into my overall philosophical outlook.

Stoic Naturalism. One feature is the way virtue ethics in the stoic tradition combines naturalism and practical intelligence in ethics. The naturalism part comes from focusing exclusively on the possibilities for human endeavors in the physical and social environments we inhabit, without

appeal to supernatural factors. The practical intelligence part identifies the moral point of view as the all-things-considered one (something I have been urging since 1973) and insists on scientifically and logically warranted beliefs about the world and the range of human endeavors that are justifiable within it.

Such naturalism is a very good thing if we can make it work. Ethical theory makes a great deal of sense to me when it is grounded in the reality of the human condition and our developing understanding of the physical and social environments we inhabit. It makes much less sense when it is done a priori or tethered only to our intuitions. But it is clear that making virtue ethics successful in this way requires paying attention to the relevant contemporary science. And it may be that this requires not only persistent but ingenious collaborative efforts. See the recent collection *Developing the Virtues: Integrating Perspectives*, edited by Julia Annas, Darcia Narvaez, and Nancy E. Snow.

Stoic Moral Development. A second feature can be found in the powerful developmental story stoicism offers to moral psychology, described at length in chapters 5 and 6. Most of this comes through the workings of *oikeiōsis*. Through that process of internalization, or appropriation, of external “objects,” the infant’s egoistic behavior becomes transformed by the inclusion of concern for the welfare of others for their own sakes. That social concern, at least in a hospitable social environment, can become so deeply incorporated in the self that it is indistinguishable in strength from self-interest. And the scope of such social concern can grow wider and wider—from family or household to friends, to fellow citizens, and to all human beings. It thus becomes a basis for stoic cosmopolitanism. It also generates a powerful set of deontic virtues under the general heading of justice in which duties to others underwrite natural inclinations to act for the good of others.

This account fits remarkably well with the outlines of contemporary developmental psychology. Moreover, it gives a thoroughly naturalistic description of the emergence of an individual’s attachment to the traits commonly identified as virtues, and ultimately to a commitment to making progress toward virtue itself—as Stoics understood that term, but not quite as their rivals understood it.

The Structure of Virtue. A third feature of stoicism is the account of the structure of virtue it offers to ethical theory. Stoic ethical theory, as reconstructed in this book, describes the way healthy human agency can become organized, through the iterative and recursive processes of its

practical intelligence and wisdom, so as to subordinate vices to virtues, settle conflicts between competing virtues, unify them in pursuit of the good, and control their expression in thought, agentic activity, and conduct. This description is also thoroughly naturalistic and meant to track the relevant work in the human sciences. I find this refreshingly realistic about how one's conception of virtue fits into what we know about the development and psychological complexity of human agency generally.

Stoic Virtue and Ethical Theory. The fourth feature is something that points beyond stoic ethics itself to the agenda of virtue ethics as a whole. Consider: stoic virtue-in-the-singular (as described in this book) is a form of active, effective, agentic activity. But since that form of agentic activity aims to organize, prioritize, and make a coherent whole of *all* our endeavors—all things considered—it must do the same thing with fundamentally different *types* of ethical concerns. That is, it has to unify consequentialist concerns about always acting so as to promote the best consequences, with our deontological concerns about always acting on principle with respect to moral requirements and prohibitions, and with our virtue theoretic concerns about always acting in (good) character.

It strikes me now (though for some reason this did not happen until about 2005) that virtue ethics in the stoic tradition offers a structure that might in fact unify the main types of ethical theory without definitively subordinating one type to the others. It might do this by offering a detailed, naturalistic, and motivated conception of virtue-in-the-singular pulled along by the effort to unify practical intelligence, wisdom, and virtues-in-the-plural (including the deontological virtues) in pursuit of the good as defined in those various virtues. This is also something that I have been pursuing in various ways since 1973—mostly in articles and one long book (1986)—attempting to make room for virtue ethics in concert with the great colonial powers of modern ethical theory, deontology and consequentialism. Perhaps it would be better to give up that modest pursuit and try instead to work out the details of an underlying and unifying structure for ethical theory itself.

Whether *A New Stoicism* actually does offer a structure that can be the basis for such a contribution to ethical theory is far from clear. It is a tantalizing possibility, however.

Stoic Politics and Virtue Politics Generally

People working on stoic ethics and virtue ethics generally, especially virtue ethics in the eudaimonistic tradition, still occasionally hear the

objection that it is too vague, individualistic, and even egoistic to be the basis for an acceptable form of social and political philosophy. This objection persists despite the patient efforts of philosophers sympathetic to the eudaimonistic tradition to point out the obvious evidence to the contrary. In that tradition, a “happy” life always includes virtue, and virtue always includes the virtue of justice—including its many subsidiary parts, such as reciprocity, mutual advantage, mutual benevolence, and dispositions to solve problems of coordination, cooperation, and conflict. Virtue also includes temperance, courage, wisdom, their subsidiary parts, and other socially and politically relevant subparts. From Socrates onward, it has been argued that those virtues defeat radical amoralists like Thrasymachus in Plato’s *Republic* and ground strong political duties that involve self-sacrifice for the good of one’s family, neighbors, and fellow citizens. Stoicism takes a big step beyond that in definitively rejecting parochial ethical standards and recommending a cosmopolitan frame of reference in which virtue-in-the-singular is available to all healthy human agents. And for the profound influence of Stoic thought on Renaissance and early modern political philosophy (along with a pointedly anti-Stoic tradition), see Christopher Brooke, *Philosophic Pride: Stoicism and Political Thought from Lipsius to Rousseau*.

Perplexity

So it is hard to see how this objection persists. It certainly cannot come from ancient examples of apolitical Stoics, because for every one of those we can name we can name others who were very political—especially in the Roman era. Perhaps the objection comes from the fact that eudaimonists are always trying to perfect themselves—to create the conditions in themselves that will yield to good lives for themselves. But that also seems wildly off the mark as an objection to any form of virtue ethics that emphasizes justice, courage, and temperance as necessary for happiness.

Perhaps, then, the objection comes from the certainty (suspicion?) that the virtues are ultimately only something like general, dispositional intentions to do things that are very broadly specified. If so, how can they be sufficient to yield determinate guidance on a given public policy question, or on yes-or-no judicial decisions on a given case? To borrow a distinction from Ronald Dworkin, critics may suspect that virtues are at best constellations of stable, internalized principles that each have some “weight” in making decisions in cases where we do not have determinate legal or moral rules. If that is so, then it seems that what we need for politics, law, and social justice is not an appeal to the virtues but rather an appeal to moral rules, the Kantian moral law, or some form of

consequentialism or social contract theory with a good decision procedure. Stoics need to face the fact (so the criticism goes) that they are too self-involved, and that stoic ethics will not yield an adequate account of political and social justice.

Misplaced Criticism

Paying better attention to stoic agency, virtue, and eudaimonia will show why stoic virtue ethics has a powerful political dimension. This is so because an encompassing form of agentic activity (for each agent) is central to it and inseparable from stoic virtue and eudaimonia. The stoic moral agent described in this book is relentlessly active, not passive. This is true both for sages and for people who are (merely!) making progress toward virtue. In either case the stoic moral agent is applying practical wisdom to a succession of endeavors—personal, political, or social—with the aim of controlling how those endeavors are expressed in attention, imagination, intention, deliberation, emotion, and conduct. As practical intelligence matures into practical wisdom, it gets better and better at subordinating vices to virtues, coordinating the virtues to avoid conflicts, and expressing those virtues in conduct so as to optimize their accomplishment. It constrains competing endeavors and filters out the ones of subordinate importance in all of our agentic activity, case by case. As we make more and more progress toward ideal agency, then, we get better and better at all our activities—in all the efforts to exercise our agentic powers in whatever situations we face, and in whatever endeavors we are engaged in.

Moreover, as the text points out repeatedly, stoic moral agents are significantly diverse—as diverse as we can expect to find in any reasonably hospitable social environment. Some will be political, others will be apolitical. Some will be socially involved, others will be withdrawn. Some socially involved people will be aggressively involved, and striving for leadership roles. Others will be passively uninvolved, avoiding leadership roles. But there will be stoic participation in politics and matters of social justice. All stoic moral agents will operate in terms of a set of virtues expressed in ways consistent with optimizing their endeavors within the physical and social environments they inhabit. That means that each agent's endeavors will have to be, at a minimum, strategically aimed at solving social problems of coordination, cooperation, and conflict. Such strategic thinking alone leads to an elaborate *modus vivendi* for social and political life that takes account of how and why one's own endeavors are likely to fit into those of others. That is more like diplomacy in the national interest than a concern for global justice. But it is a long way from anarchy. Or Hobbes's state of nature.

For many stoic moral agents, however, we can expect cooperative conduct that is much more than simply strategically motivated. To the extent that they have internalized, through *oikeiōsis*, an active endeavor to treat other people's interests as if they were their own, mutual advantage will become genuine mutuality of concern. And it will be expressed in conduct that is genuinely political and genuinely social.

Objection. This is still too weak. It is still tainted by each agent's relentless pursuit of personal happiness, and personal success in personal endeavors. Where is the account of human rights? Where is the account of the inherent rights of others to pursue their own lives? Even if genuine mutuality develops among stoic moral agents, it still seems much too situational to support a robust political commitment to social justice. It sounds as though once things get difficult, everyone's practical intelligence will drive people away from mutuality and back to egoism. Let's see how stoicism can generate an account of inherent moral rights that survive in *inhospitable* physical and social environments. Let's see some categorical commitments to such rights rather than escape clauses of the form "unless, of course, relevant circumstances change."

Reply. I am not aware of any ethical theory that can justify such categorical commitments. The reasons were expressed convincingly by John Stuart Mill in chapter 5 of *Utilitarianism*. Every attempt to set up a right or a duty of justice that is independent of its consequences is going to be ultimately indefensible. If the right or duty is understood to be absolute and without exceptions, it will either be aimless (ungrounded in any larger, underlying enterprise) or self-defeating in some important cases. Either option leads to indefensibility—to a form of mindless rigorism that cannot survive philosophical scrutiny. If the right or duty is understood to be conditional or to have exceptions, however, then the justification of those conditions or exceptions will always have to appeal (at least in part) to consequences. In that case, again, it is fair to think that the deontological human rights or duties involved are, by themselves, insufficient to resolve practical problems.

Back to stoic moral agency and virtue ethics generally. I suggest that a similar argument can be constructed for any notion of human dignity or moral worth that is meant to replace the consequentialist aspect of the practical wisdom that controls stoic moral agency. In stoicism, the separate virtues operate in much the same way that deontological principles operate: those principles are initial constraints on the range of eventual decisions. They are filters on what is initially thinkable as a resolution to a given practical political, social, economic, or legal problem. But when those initial constraints on decision making force us to consider possible exceptions or contingencies, practical wisdom will have to resolve the problem. And it will have to do so in ways that include consequentialist

considerations. So there is nothing unusually vague or incomplete about virtue ethics generally, and certainly not about stoic virtue ethics.

Stoicism as a Guide to Living Well

The recent and remarkable growth of books, organizations, and events devoted to examining stoicism as a guide to living should be mentioned here. The relevance of this new movement to the project of *A New Stoicism* is both direct and indirect. That will perhaps be even clearer after the mention of some relevant resources for the new movement, and some remarks about moral education in the stoic tradition.

Resources

Stoicism as a way of life, as a therapy, or as a guide for living has always been a leading topic both within the stoic tradition itself, and in books that bring stoicism to a wider public, whether by endorsing it or not. Recent editions of texts by Roman Stoics (Seneca 2007; 2010; 2014; 2015; Musonius Rufus 2011; Epictetus 2014; Marcus Aurelius 2014) address these topics. So does the *Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, edited by Brad Inwood, and the *Routledge Handbook of the Stoic Tradition*, on philosophy, theology, and literature, edited by John Sellars. So also, obviously, do some recent books directly in the guide-for-living tradition: Stockdale (1993), Irvine (2009), Stephens (2012), Stankiewicz (2014), and Pigliucci (2017) are examples. For present purposes, however, it is also wise to consult works that give an overview of a large range of ancient eudaimonistic theories on this point. See Annas (1993), Hadot (1995), Nussbaum (2009 [1994]), Sellars (2009), and Cooper (2012).

Modern stoicism has grown so much in the last twenty-five years that it defies easy explanation. It may, for example, have gotten an initial push by a book mentioned above: the publication in 1993 of Adm. James Stockdale's harrowing description of stoic guidance in *Courage under Fire: Testing Epictetus's Doctrines in a Laboratory of Human Behavior*. (The laboratory was seven years of torture and solitary confinement in a prisoner-of-war camp.) But major books on Hellenistic philosophy by Julia Annas (1993) and Martha Nussbaum (1994) came out at about the same time, and the online community called the New Stoa dates to 1996. Tom Wolfe's novel *A Man in Full* (in which Epictetus figures prominently) came out in 1998 and was widely read and reviewed in literary circles. A. A. Long's subsequent scholarly book on Epictetus (2002) must have had a part in the movement as well. Then came influential work by

Christopher Gill, William Irvine, Donald Robertson, and others; the activities and publications of the Stoicism Today organization in and around Exeter University, including a series of Stoic Week lectures and activities devoted to stoic practice; the STOICON meetings; and the recent work of the philosopher Massimo Pigliucci, both in various online venues and in a new book (2017). There is much more—on YouTube, for example.

Two Relevant Texts from Ancient Stoicism

We don't know as much as we need to know about Panaetius in this context, because the texts are so scanty. And of course Seneca continues to surprise because relevant remarks on one subject are often buried in letters or essays on other topics. Some examples:

From Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (sec. 66, at E), here is a sample of Panaetius's account, via Cicero, of the four "*personae*" or roles stoics are expected to put into coherent conduct, at (1), (2), and (7) below. Note that Cicero first says there are two roles, and then at (7) he mentions two more.

Cicero, On duties 1.107, 110–11, 114–17 (including Panaetius fr. 97) (1) It should also be understood that nature has endowed us with two roles, as it were. One of these is universal, from the fact that we all share in reason and that status which raises us above the beasts; this is the source of all rectitude and propriety, and the basis of the rational discovery of our proper functions. (2) The second role is the one which has been specifically assigned to individuals. Just as there are great bodily differences between people . . . so too there are still greater mental divergences. . . . (3) To secure that propriety more easily which we are seeking, each person should firmly hold on to those characteristics of his which are not vicious but peculiar to himself. For we must so act that we do nothing in opposition to human nature in general, and yet, while keeping that secure, follow our own nature. Thus, even if a different course would be more dignified and superior, we should still regulate our own pursuits by the rule of our own nature. For it is pointless to resist one's own nature and to pursue something which one cannot attain. . . . (4) The whole essence of propriety is quite certainly consistency, both in life as a whole and in individual actions, and you cannot secure this if you imitate other people's nature and overlook your own. . . . (5) Each person therefore should get to know his own temperament and show himself an acute judge of his own merits and weaknesses. . . . (6) We shall work most effectively, then, at those things to which we are best suited. But if we are sometimes shoved by circumstances into roles which are not germane to our temperament, we should give all our thought, effort and attention to performing them, if not with propriety, at

least with as little impropriety as possible. . . . (7) To the above-mentioned two roles, a third is appended, which some chance or circumstance imposes: and a fourth as well, which we take upon ourselves by our own decision. Headships of state, military commands, noble birth, public office, wealth, resources and their opposites depend on chance and are ruled by circumstances. But what role we ourselves are willing to take on depends on our own free choice. Hence some take up philosophy, others civil law, others oratory, and people differ as to which virtues they prefer to excel in. . . . (8) Above all we must decide who and what sort of people we want to be, and what kind of life we want to lead; and this is the most difficult question of all.

Long and Sedley comment on this at the end of section 66:

[It is] Panaetius' almost certainly original doctrine that proper functions are specifiable by reference to "four roles" which each person has. . . . The word translated "role" is *persona* (the Latin for an actor's mask), and Panaetius' theory intriguingly anticipates modern conceptions of personality and role play. Roles one and two (E 1–6) refer respectively to the shared rationality of all human beings ("universal nature") and the physical, mental and temperamental nature of the individual. In proposing the latter, in agreement with the former, as a guideline of how persons should act and shape their lives, Panaetius gave Stoicism an insight that has some resemblance to the Aristotelian "mean that is relative to us": Aristotle had stipulated personal idiosyncrasies as factors each person should consider in developing a moral disposition that avoids excess or deficiency in feelings and actions (Nicomachean ethics 2.9). But Panaetius' insistence on the moral relevance of "personality" is an idea without clear parallel in ancient ethics. Equally impressive is the clarity with which he distinguishes the entirely accidental determinants of personal identity (role three) from the career and specializations people choose for themselves (role four, E 7). *Collectively the four roles offer an account of the general considerations people should review in deciding on their proper functions—what I ought to do as a member of the human race, as the person with my natural strengths and weaknesses, as unavoidably involved in these external circumstances, and with the lifestyle and bent I have chosen for myself.* (Emphasis added.)

And here is another snippet from Panaetius, courtesy of Seneca, in a new translation of his *Letters on Ethics: To Lucilius* (2015), letter 116, 5.

I think Panaetius gave a neat response to the youth who asked whether the wise man would fall in love. "As regards the wise man," he said, "we shall see; but as for you and me, who are a long way from achieving wisdom, we had better refrain so as to avoid a condition that is frantic, out of control, enslaved to another, and lacking in self-worth. If our advances are accepted, we are excited by the other person's favor; if not, we are set on fire by the disdain. An

easy love affair is as harmful as one fraught with difficulty; we are drawn in by ease, and we struggle against difficulty. Knowing our weakness, then, we do better to stay calm. Let us not entrust our feeble disposition to wine or beauty or flattery or any other temptation.”

To the extent that youth is wasted on the young, as the saying goes, this advice is probably also going to be wasted. Seneca knows this. He continues:

6 My point is that Panaetius’s response to the question about love applies to all emotions. Let’s stay off the slippery ground as far as possible, since it’s hard for us to stand firm even on dry land. 7 You will confront me on this issue with the standard objection to the Stoics: “Your promises are too great; your demands are too exacting. We are merely little folk; we can’t deny ourselves everything. We are going to feel sorrow, but just a bit; we are going to long for things, but in moderation; we shall get angry, but not implacably so.” 8 Do you know why we aren’t capable of such things? We don’t believe that we have that capability. In fact, though, there’s something else involved: our love for our own faults. We defend them and we would rather make excuses for them than shake them off. Human nature has been endowed with sufficient strength if only we use it. We have only to assemble our resources and get them all to fight on our behalf rather than against us. Inability is just an excuse; the real reason is unwillingness.

There is something in all this that should give people interested in stoicism as a guide to life a good deal of encouragement. Stoicism is a difficult path but not impossible. “We have only to assemble our resources and get them all to fight on our behalf rather than against us. Inability is just an excuse; the real reason is unwillingness.”

Consequences for Stoic Moral Education

Or perhaps the real reason is the weakening of our resolve, and the consequent need for stoic moral education—for rigorous stoic teaching, training, and perhaps therapy. Although this book is limited to stoic ethical theory, as it turns out its theory has some fairly direct consequences for a number of topics relevant to stoicism as a guide to life. One of these is stoic moral education. Consider the following.

As the arguments of chapter 5 and chapter 6 make clear, the first fairly long steps in moral development are strongly motivated, “natural” progressions toward healthy and fit agency. These steps are similar for all human beings who are basically healthy (in an age-appropriate way) as infants, young children, older children, and into and perhaps most of

the way through adolescence. They develop healthy agency and the motivation to use it. So the groundwork is there for the development of *moral* agency, and progress toward some form of ideal agency—agency in which practical intelligence can become strong enough and complex enough to guide agentic activity over the whole scope of one’s activities, throughout one’s life.

But at crucial points in this development, paths to different forms of agency and virtue remain open. Even people who have had strenuous religious education in a closed community, for example, from their earliest years onward, can still find themselves attracted to a different path than the one defined by their faith. At such points the motivation to continue on the natural path of agentic development can begin to weaken. Continued progress toward one form or another of moral agency can thus begin to need the support of some form of moral education, training, or even therapy.

Modern stoicism presumably should continue to address this in three ways: through teaching, training, and therapy. These have parallels in many other traditions, both religious and political. (In liberal democratic societies, for example, universal public education, public healthcare, and in some cases universal national service—military or otherwise—serve this function and may even yield a commonsense version of stoic-like moral character.) The version connected to stoic ethical theory differs from the others mainly in terms of its specifically stoic content, though the examples we have from ancient sources also suggest some differences in methods as well, as follows.

Stoic teaching. The teaching implied by stoic ethical theory would be of two sorts. (1) One is teaching the system (physics, logic, ethics) to show how encompassing and attractive it is; how it orients us as human beings in the cosmos, and how it calls our attention to the various roles we play as individuals in the physical and social environments we inhabit. On the four main roles that we play as individuals, think of Panaetius’s list as reported by Cicero and quoted above: (a) that we are human beings, a species of mortal, potentially rational animals; (b) that we have a particular set of anatomical, physiological, and psychological endowments; (c) that we inhabit physical and social environments and other circumstances not entirely of our making, and not entirely subject to our control; and (d) that in all those roles we have to choose what to do and be.

(2) The other aspect of teaching is presenting (and justifying) the outline of stoic doctrines about the development and structure of virtue: (a) that virtue is the only good, everything else being either a preferred or dispreferred indifferent; (b) that it is one thing in the sense that in practice it unifies and makes coherent the various separate virtues, and subordinates vices to the virtues; (c) that it is not a matter of degree, though

making progress toward it is a matter of degree; (d) that it is achieved through the perfection of stoic agency, which is necessary and sufficient to produce it; and (e) that such virtue is necessary and sufficient for happiness in the form of stoic eudaimonia.

Stoic training. The training would also be of two sorts. (1) One is the application of principles and precepts to hypothetical or actual cases. Think of Epictetus, and his repeated application of two principles in a multitude of cases brought to him by his students. One principle is something like “Recognize first which things in this situation are within your control, and which ones are not.” The other principle is something like “In considering which things you should go for, always go for virtue, which is the only good, and be ready to let go of the ones that are morally indifferent.” These exercises in the application of principles can often be done by reading Epictetus’s *Handbook* and *Discourses*, Seneca’s letters and essays, or Marcus Aurelius’s *Meditations*. But they can also be done with a teacher or tutor—much as a teacher helps students develop certain skills through rigorous and guided practice. Think of the drills that characterize vocabulary and grammar instruction in foreign languages; scales and fingering in piano instruction; doing problem sets in mathematics and logic; and so forth.

(2) Another aspect of stoic training might be the mental and/or physical rehearsal of one’s activities both before the fact and after the fact to locate the parts of the activities that may be problematic but correctable, and the parts that are not in one’s control. This is sometimes supplemented by a process of positive visualization of how to “get it right” at each step in the process: identifying the goal, deliberating about the best way to pursue the goal, choosing to act in the best way possible to pursue the goal, and developing the expertise and appropriate dispositions for acting that way in the variety of situations one may face.

This sort of rehearsal is very much like the way athletes, surgeons, and airline pilots train. And in fact it might be useful to think about this kind of rehearsal as a way of keeping up one’s motivation to make progress toward virtue. It would have to be immersive, alternately intense and relaxed, strenuous, physically and intellectually challenging, and keep the visualization and practice positive enough so that the awareness of all the ways things can go wrong does not weaken one’s effort to get it right, and do it right. (Negative visualization can be so powerful that it weakens performance.) All this involves forms of “coaching,” rather than what we ordinarily call teaching or therapy.

Stoic therapy. Therapy often implies an effort to correct various forms of ill health. Treating stoicism as a form of alternative medicine, however, is problematic. It can sometimes guide diagnosis and treatment of psychological illnesses if and when related forms of cognitive or behavioral

therapy can have good outcomes. But insofar as the pathology involved is organic—for example, due to neurophysiological deficits or damage—stoic therapy is probably not applicable. And in general, such therapy is probably best at treating basically healthy people who need additional strength in making progress toward virtue. In that case, the cognitive and behavioral therapy involved may look very much like stoic training, especially when it is encouraging and compassionate.

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