

A PUZZLE IN STOIC ETHICS

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THIS paper is an expression of perplexity. Recent decades have seen immense scholarly progress in our understanding of Stoicism; yet on some fundamental points the structure of Stoic moral theory remains, to me at any rate, quite obscure. This is true in particular of the Stoic doctrine of the 'indifferents' (*ἀδιάφορα*), a doctrine so central to Stoicism that the puzzle I will be raising about it can also be phrased as the following general question: 'How is a Stoic supposed to deliberate?' If this question is as hard to answer as I think it is, then there is still a great deal which remains to be understood about Stoic moral theory.

The plan of the paper is as follows. Section I sketches what I take to be a *prima facie* plausible and largely familiar account of the indifferents and their role in the Stoic system; Section II shows that this account cannot be reconciled with other important Stoic doctrines, especially when we make explicit some of the assumptions and implications it involves. In Sections III–V I consider various ways in which the account offered in Section I might be altered to produce a coherent theory. Section VI considers what we might learn from the fact that these attempts fail.

But first two caveats. This paper will largely ignore one kind of response to the puzzle I raise, namely, the dissolution of apparent tensions and conflicts through the claim that different Stoics held substantially different views on the questions I consider.¹ (In

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This paper began life as comments on Tad Brennan's paper 'Demoralizing the Stoics', and is indebted to it, and to discussions with him, in many ways (cf. also nn. 24, 27, and 42 below). I have also been helped by discussions with Eric Brown, Charles Larmore, Stephen Menn, and Martha Nussbaum, and by helpful criticisms of earlier drafts by Brad Inwood, Richard Kraut, Martha Nussbaum, David Sedley, Candace Vogler, and participants in the University of Chicago Ancient Philosophy Workshop.

¹ Cf. I. C. Kidd, 'Stoic Intermediates and the End for Man', in A. A. Long (ed.), *Problems in Stoicism* (London, 1971), 150–72.

nature' being added as a clarification by his successor Cleanthes.⁴ The third scholar, Chrysippus, elaborated further: the end is 'living in accordance with experience of what happens by nature'.⁵ These formulations are still very abstract, and it is no surprise that later Stoics continued to tinker with the definition of the *telos*. According to Diogenes of Babylon, head of the Stoic school in the second century BC, the *telos* was 'reasoning well in the selection [ἐκλογῆ] and disselection of the things in accordance with nature [τῶν κατὰ φύσιν]'.⁶ His successor, the scholar, Antipater of Tarsus, claimed that it is 'to live continuously selecting [ἐκλεγόμενος] the things in accordance with nature'; or, still more carefully but longwindedly, 'to do everything in one's power continuously and undeviatingly with a view to obtaining [τυγχάνει] the predominating things in accordance with nature [τῶν προηγούμενων κατὰ φύσιν]'.⁷ And likewise the roughly contemporary Archedemus, with a rather enigmatic addition: the *telos* is to live 'selecting [ἐκλεγόμενον] the greatest and most important things in accordance with nature [ἄ κατὰ φύσιν μέγιστα καὶ κυριώτατα], not being able to overcome them [οὐχ οἷον τε ὄντα ὑπερβαίνειν]'.⁸ That such formulae aim to elucidate a shared idea is confirmed by Cicero's readiness to combine them at *De finibus* 3. 31: 'the supreme good is to live applying one's knowledge

⁴ Stob. ii. 75. 11-16. 6 (LS 63b). Stobaeus references are to volume, page, and line of the edition by Wachsmuth and Hense (Berlin, 1884; repr. Berlin, 1958).
⁵ *ἔτη κατ' ἐμπειρίαν τῶν φέσει συμβαπτῶν*, Stob. ii. 76. 6-8 (LS 63b).
⁶ Stob. ii. 76. 9-10 (LS 58k). Inwood has suggested that Chrysippus himself already offered a fuller formulation of the *telos* incorporating 'selection' (*Ethics and Human Action in Earlier Stoicism* [Ithaca] (Oxford, 1985), 203, cf. 317 n. 98). However, the evidence for this, including Cic. *Fin.* 3. 31, can equally well be read as running together several compatible formulations.
⁷ Stob. ii. 76. 11-15 (LS 58k). On the somewhat mysterious concept of the 'predominating' (*προηγούμενον*) cf. S.E. *M.* 1. 48 and Stob. ii. 84. 24-85. 1 and (citing Hierocles) iv. 502. 10-13. Stobaeus ii. 84. 24-85. 1 suggests that the Stoics used *προηγούμενον* to provide a quasi-etymological explanation of the 'preferred' (*προηγούμενον*) as what is supported by 'predominating' reason, i.e., one which is leading or principled, or takes precedence (κατὰ προηγούμενον λόγον, actually from *προηγόμενα*, though no ancient etymology). It is also reasonably frequent in Epictetus, but its usage does little to clarify its meaning (1. 20. 14; 2. 4. 2. 8. 8; 3. 7. 6. 24-6; 4. 22. 76).
⁸ Clem. *Strom.* 2. 21 (= *SF* iii. 21, Archedemus). Whether 'overcome' is really the right translation of *ὑπερβαίνειν* here and what Archedemus might mean by it, are unclear to me. Archedemus is more frequently cited as claiming that the *telos* consists in fulfilling all the appropriate actions (D.L. 7. 88; Stob. ii. 76. 10-11). Presumably the two formulations are somehow equivalent: how this could be so is another way of putting the problem which this paper attempts to set forth.

Section V, however, I do argue for treating Cicero's position in *De officiis* 3 as a breach with tradition; and I will in general be excluding Panaetius and Posidonius from the discussion. My hypothesis is that the difficulties here are too close to the core commitments of Stoicism for this strategy to be entirely successful; but though I think the paper as a whole will make this view plausible, I do not directly argue for it. Second, I should emphasize that the paper is negative in intent. It aims to articulate a puzzle rather than to solve it (or, indeed, to endorse any positive reading of Stoic moral theory); and that puzzle is, primarily at any rate, one about the organization of Stoic ethics—not about what general doctrinal machine-behaviour Stoicism endorses, but about how its reasoning. Some very fits together, if at all, in relation to practical reasoning. Some of the interpretative options I consider here may imply revisionist views as to what actions are required of a practicing Stoic: but I take that to be a strike against those options. However, if I am right about how poorly the various doctrinal commitments of Stoic ethics fit together, it may follow that there was more practical indeterminacy to Stoicism than we tend to assume. At the end, I will bring out some implications of that suggestion.²

I

At the heart of Stoicism lies its conception of the *telos* or 'end' of human life, i.e. happiness. Successive generations of Stoic philosophers summarized the *telos* in different formulae but since a shared conception of the *telos* was definitive of a philosophical school, later formulations must have been intended more as elucidations than innovations (cf. Cic. *Fin.* 5. 14-15). The starting point was the formula of the founder, Zeno, who defined the end either as 'living in agreement with nature'³ or simply as 'living in agreement', 'with

² Cf. Brad Inwood's similar conclusion, reached from a very different starting point: 'In no useful sense does Stoic moral theory tell the agent what is to be done in a concrete case' ('Rules and Reasoning in Stoic Ethics', in K. Inwood (ed.), *Stoicism* (Cambridge, 1999), 95-127 at 125).
³ *τὸ ὁμολογουμένως τῇ φύσει ἔτη*, D.L. 7. 87 (LS 63c). Quoted in the number is supplied in the translations of Long and Sedley, sometimes lightly revised (A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* [LS] (2 vols., Cambridge, 1987)). I have consistently translated *καθήκον* as 'appropriate action' in place of LS's 'proper function'.

with nature are to-be-taken, and all things contrary to nature lot-to-be-taken' (Stob. ii. 82. 20-1 (LS 58C)).

Now these categories also seem to be equated with those of the 'different' (ἀδιάφορα) which are 'preferred' (προσσημεία) and 'disferred' (ἀπροσσημεία)—the clumsy terminology is said to be Diogenes' own coinage (Cic. *Fin.* 3. 51; Stob. ii. 84. 21-4). As Diogenes Laertius explains, some things are 'indifferent' inasmuch as 'activate neither impulse nor repulsion, as in the case of having added or even number of hairs on one's head, or stretching or contracting a finger' (7. 104 (LS 58A)). But these *absolute* indifferents, we might call them (καθ'αυτὰς ἀδιάφορα, Stob. ii. 79. 9), must be distinguished from other things which are 'indifferent' in a weaker sense. The latter make no difference to our happiness or unhappiness; yet they are still capable of moving us to action, and may be done so rationally and appropriately. These are the objects of selection and disselection (D.L. 7. 104-5). So selection and disselection are applicable to objects which, without being genuinely good or bad, are still capable of appropriately arousing 'impulse' (ἰσχύς), i.e. the assent to a motivating impression, which is, in Stoic philosophy, the cause of human action.¹²

Various confusions and refinements apart,¹³ the position so far I will have little to say in this paper about impulses and impressions. One should expect these concepts to be the crucial framework for Stoic thinking about deliberation: however, so far as I can see, all the very different models of deliberation considered in this paper are compatible with what we know about the Stoic theory of action.

I cannot here enter into all of these complications, but will note a few; cf. the discussion of A. F. Bonhöffer, *The Ethics of the Stoic Epictetus [Ἐπικτητῆος]*, trans. W. Stephens (New York, 1906; first pub., Stuttgart, 1894, cited by original pagination), 177.

(1) Diogenes Laertius and Stobaeus both distinguish three senses of value (ἀξία) (L. 7. 105; Stob. ii. 83. 11-84. 3); they do not correspond very exactly, however, to Stobaeus' are further complicated by some comments attributed to Diogenes of Babylon (ii. 84. 4-17). In both texts, one of the three senses relates to the appraisal of an expert, which seems unilluminating and perhaps irrelevant here (though of course the Sage is an expert on the values of things). Of Diogenes Laertius' other two senses, one applies to all goods; the other is 'a certain intermediate power or use' (ἰσχύς καὶ δυνάμει ἢ χρήσει) which contributes to the life in accordance with nature; examples of this are health and wealth, so this is clearly the sense (or one of the senses) in which value is characteristic of the preferred indifferents. Of Stobaeus' other two senses, one, credited to Antipater, is 'selective' (ἐκλεκτική) value; this too is marked by the examples of health and wealth as being the value belonging to the preferred indifferents. The other sense is 'a thing's contribution and rank in itself' (ἡ τῆς δόξης καὶ τιμῆς καθ' αἰρέσει) (ii. 83. 12 (LS 58D)); it would be natural to take this as corresponding to Diogenes Laertius' sense reserved for goods. However, at

of the natural order, selecting what accords with nature [*seligenti naturae secundum naturam* . . . *sumi*], and rejecting what is contrary. This is what it is to live consistently and harmoniously with nature.⁹

But how are we to understand these formulations, and in particular their rather opaque allusions to the 'selection of things' in accordance with nature' [ἐκλέγεσθαι τὰ κατὰ φύσιν]? Unless we implicitly suppose Diogenes and Antipater to have departed rationally from (previous) school orthodoxy,¹⁰ this crucial innovation must be offered in explanation of the more basic principle of agreement with nature. (I will use positive terms such as 'selection' and 'disselection', 'contrary to nature'), rather than continually repeat both sides of what, as we will see, becomes quite a complicated schema.) And though 'nature' is the central normative concept of Stoicism, with many complex senses and roles, the phrase 'things in accordance with nature' may be reasonably straightforward; forward; for the associated concept of 'selection' [ἐκλογή] here seems to mark it as having a somewhat specialized sense.¹¹

To see what 'the things in accordance with nature' are, we need to begin by seeing their relation to some other key concepts. First, though the relevant passages are complex, confusing, and loaded with qualifications, our sources regularly tie 'the things in accordance with/contrary to nature' to another pair of concepts: 'value' (ἀξία) and 'disvalue' (ἀπαξία). 'All things in accordance with nature have value and all things contrary to nature have disvalue' (Stob. ii. 83. 10-11 (LS 58D)). Thus what has 'value' is the proper object of selection (ἐκλογή)—or, in what seems to be an equivalent locution, is 'to be taken' (ληπτόν). What has 'disvalue' is contrary to nature and is to be 'disselected' and 'rejected'. Thus 'All things in accordance with nature have value and all things contrary to nature have disvalue' (Stob. ii. 83. 10-11 (LS 58D)). Thus what has 'value' is the proper object of selection (ἐκλογή)—or, in what seems to be an equivalent locution, is 'to be taken' (ληπτόν). What has 'disvalue' is contrary to nature and is to be 'disselected' and 'rejected'. Thus 'All things in accordance with nature have value and all things contrary to nature have disvalue' (Stob. ii. 83. 10-11 (LS 58D)).

⁹ Quotations from *De finibus* are in the translation of Raphael Woolf: Cicero *Moral Ends*, ed. J. Annas, trans. R. Woolf (Cambridge, 2001).

¹⁰ Cf. LS i. 407: Diogenes' formulation 'was certainly offered as a supplement to Chrysippus' and not as a deviation from it'.

¹¹ Cf. also *SIF* iii. 109-6 on selection. Of course, given the Stoic identification of God, fate, and the cosmic order, properly speaking *whatever happens* is 'in accordance with nature' (cf. e.g. Plut. *Stoic. repugn.* 1050 B-D, quoting Chrysippus, at Chrysippus ap. Epict. 2. 6. 9-10). But the fact that the good Stoic endorses whatever fate sends, once it has been sent, does not in itself tell us (or him) anything useful about how to deliberate. For τὰ κατὰ φύσιν to pick out any determinate set of options, and play a meaningful role in deliberation, it *must* have a special sense I take to be marked in these contexts by its association with 'selection' (ἐκλογή).

tive standing of nature to which I alluded earlier. We are endowed by nature with an inborn orientation to our own constitution and whatever promotes it: like animals, we have a natural tendency to pursue health rather than sickness. So the preferred indifferents are in accordance with nature in the important sense that we are constituted by providence (or God, or 'universal nature'), to have an impulse towards them. Strictly speaking, *everything* fate sends us is in accordance with nature; for it serves the interests of the whole and with it our interest as parts of that whole.¹⁶ But since we do not know what is fated, we should act on the basis of our innate tendency to select the preferred indifferents—a tendency, after all, which nature or God has itself beneficently instilled in us.¹⁷ Thus when the advanced Stoic forms the impulse to pursue some indifferent, he does not simply give in to a habit or ingrained tendency, but recognizes a demand of nature and reason.

There is also a second line of reasoning behind the attribution of value to the indifferents. This can best be seen by considering the challenge posed to Stoic orthodoxy by the views of Aristo of Chios. Aristo notoriously rejected the categories 'preferred' and 'dispreferred' and insisted that everything between virtue and vice was absolutely indifferent—and indeed that the *telos* consisted precisely in indifference to everything except virtue and vice (S.E. *M.* 1.1. 64–7; D.L. 7. 160; Cic. *Fin.* 3. 50). The correct interpretation of Aristo's position is a matter of some controversy, but two of his arguments are worth noting here. One is that under special circumstances, it is rational to disprefer the 'preferred', and vice versa. If a tyrant is drafting all healthy men into his army, where they can expect to be killed, while the sick are exempt, the wise man will choose sickness over health (S.E. *M.* 1.1. 64–7).

This argument makes a point which the Stoics could and indeed did accommodate: they need only distinguish between the claim that some indifferent type is in general 'preferred' and the fact that tokens of it may or may not be preferred (i.e. be rational objects of selection) in particular contexts, all things considered.¹⁸ But Aristo adds to it an analogy which cannot be accommodated by the or-

¹⁶ Cf. Plut. *Stoic. repugn.* 1050 C–D; Gellius 7. 1.

¹⁷ Cf. Chrysippus ap. Epict. 2. 6. 9–10.

¹⁸ Aristo's argument still scores a decent *ad hominem* point, however, if only regarding terminological hygiene. For he shows that the *Euthydemus* argument relied on by the Stoics can be made to tell against their own position: after all, if non-moral 'goods' should not be deemed good because they are not beneficial in every

theory: 'Just as in writing people's names we put different first at different times, adapting them to the different circumstances . . . so too in the things which are between virtue and nature . . . natural priority for some over others arises but a priority based rather on circumstances' (S.E. *M.* 1.1. 67 (LS 58F)). The Sage would determine what circumstances require seems been left obscure by Aristo; and the Stoics charged that should be *no* rational basis for action if everything other than and vice were absolutely indifferent. Cicero thus claims that to's view, 'the whole of life would be thrown into chaos . . . would have no role or function, since there would be no ce whatsoever between any of the things that pertain to the it of life, and so no method of choosing could properly be' (Fin. 3. 50).

response to Aristo brings out an important point which we already have suspected from the *telos* formulae of Diogenes Lipator: 'the selection and disselection of indifferents' is evipator: 'description of *any and all rational action*. For only in that considerations of value necessary for practical reason to y 'role or function' at all. (I will return to the implications shortly.)

the intermediate standing of the 'indifferents' is fixed by ul convergent pressures within Stoicism. On the one side is tonic argument that such things cannot be genuinely good —an argument not just passively inherited from Plato, but ury to the central Stoic project (shared with their Epicurean of showing that happiness is always within our power. On er are two powerful reasons to ascribe genuine value to the ents: first, the need to endorse the natural drives and dispo- granted to us by providence; and second, the need to stop if the arguably irrationalist position reached by Aristo. Hence icate and terminologically laborious system of balances and ations which make up the Stoic account of the indifferents. one hand, indifferents may be genuinely and objectively l, valuable, preferred and selected; on the other, they *cannot* d, beneficial, constitutive of happiness, or legitimate objects ce and desire.¹⁹

neither should they be called 'preferred' when they are not *preferable* in uation.

note in passing another important aspect of the indifferents' role, the mis-

In most of our sources, the contrast between the indifferents typically appears as an ethical one. But the indifferents also play a crucial role in human maturation and moral development. Other animals, naturally seeks what will provide the necessary starting point for its perfect actions' (*καθ'ἑκόντα*). In the important *De finibus* 3, Cicero explains:

With this established, the initial 'appropriate action' I call the Greek *καθ'ἑκόν*) is to preserve oneself in the next is to take what is in accordance with nature. Once this method of selection (and likewise rejection) then goes hand in hand with appropriate selection becomes continuous and, finally, stable and (Fin. 3. 20)

This might suggest that the 'things in accordance with nature' are merely a starting point, to be transcended once appropriate actions have got off the ground. Attitude to the indifferents is, Cicero explains, to recognize the infinitely greater beauty and appropriateness of action itself, in something of conversion or transcendent insight (Fin. 3. 21). And as it were concordance in the order and as it were concordance in the objects, one then values that concordance much more highly than those first objects of affection' (3. 21). This concordance (Cicero notes the Stoic use of the Greek term *ἁρμονία*) is the true location of the only thing to be sought in virtue of itself, whereas none of the primary objects of nature is to be sought on its own account' (ibid.).

But this transformation, and the Stoic agent's new commitment to the supreme importance of rational action, does not have the implications we might assume. Cicero in *De finibus* 3, agent who has fully grasped the indifferents, will continue to select them. Nor is the instrumental one, as a means to the noble end of talking them to be genuinely good or bad is the states, the emotions (*πάθη*). This helps to explain why something like 'noble birth' in the list of indifferents (De finibus 3. 106): I can hardly pursue it, but I might be mistakenly pained at not having it.

despite the somewhat misleading language just quoted.²⁰ Neither is there any indication that the considerations on the basis of which the advanced Stoic selects indifferents differ in kind from those applied previously. True, the advanced Stoic's deliberation is characterized by a new detachment, owing to his recognition that no indifferent is genuinely good or bad; and he now values *homologia*, consistency, in action more than any particular indifferent—just as he now recognizes that the *telos* (according to Diogenes of Babylon, anyway) is a matter not of selecting (let alone obtaining) the indifferents but of 'reasoning well' in doing so. But it is not clear that norms such as 'reasoning well' and 'being consistent' will figure in the Stoic's deliberations as, so to speak, considerations in their own right—indeed, they could not do so unless she can give them a more concrete sense than Cicero provides. Rationality and consistency may be better understood as deliberative virtues which supervene when selection, understood as before, is carried out correctly and in the right spirit. (Of course, just what 'correctly' might mean remains to be clarified: see the remainder of this section and Section II.) And it seems likely that we are to understand the 'transformation' of selection in just this way. The indifferents remain objects of our agency in their own right, as Cicero flatly affirms:

What I have called 'appropriate actions' originate from nature's starting points, and so the former must be directed towards the latter. Thus it may rightly be said that *all appropriate actions are aimed at our attaining the natural principles [principia naturae]*. It does not mean, however, that this attainment is our ultimate good, since moral action is not included among our original natural attachments. (Fin. 3. 22, my emphasis)²¹

Otherwise, he notes, the Stoic Sage would risk ending up, like

²⁰ Pace G. Lesses, 'Virtue and the Goods of Fortune in Stoic Moral Theory', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, (1989), 95–128. An instrumental role (in any normal sense) for the preferred indifferents would actually give them a much closer connection to the good of virtue than is compatible with the profound separation between the two on which both the Stoics and their critics insist. In any normal sense, because the 'hierarchical' relation I elaborate later in this section, using the model of motivations in a game, could (rather misleadingly) be described as making the selection of goods (though not the goods themselves) a means to a higher end.

²¹ Does Cicero (or his source) simply assume that whatever is the 'primary' object of our impulses in the temporal sense must also be *logically* primary, by forming the raw material of all deliberation? This assumption (for which cf. Galen, *Plac. Hipp. et Plat.* 5. 6. 10–14; Cic. *Fin.* 5. 17–21) is obviously questionable. But it can perhaps be explained by the Stoic commitment to preserving continuity with our natural tendencies as seamlessly as the Epicurean could claim to do (cf. sect. vi).

So to progress as a Stoic is to learn to care not to desire the preferred indifferents with urgency appropriate to goods; but we are to opt for them with tranquil diligence. As Seneca puts it in an addily debonair moment

Of course I will [select preferred indifferents]. But because they are in accordance with nature and because they will be taken on the basis of my good judgement. 'What then, will be good in them?' Just this—being well selected. For when clothes, or walk as I should, or dine as I should walking nor the clothes are good, but the intention preserving a measure, in each thing, which comes, but the selection of elegant clothes, since the good is not in the thing, but in the quality of the selection. (*Ep.* 92. 11–12 (LS 64f))

Unsurprisingly, this delicate position was the focus of attacks by the Stoics' philosophical rivals. A standard criticism was that the status the Stoics wish to assign to the indifferents is unstable: if they are not matters of pure, Aristonian indifference, the preferred indifferents must really be a rival good. I call the complex dialectic between the Stoics and their critics on this question the *intermediate status*. I will briefly argue, however, that which the Stoics assign to the indifferents is defensible; seeing how this is so will help to bring out the point at which, I will suggest, the Stoic account does become problematic.

As a starting point, consider the Stoic possessed and exercised as a unity, collecting and exercising aspects of that craft (*technē*) of living. The Stoics seek to collect by way of analogies, with various other skills, navigation and medicine, dice-playing and archery. The last of these is the most suggestive here: the Stoic account of the relation of the indifferents to the *telos* is supported by comparison with an archer whose goal is not to hit the target (a suggestion that is not to be made, even if he executes perfectly, even if he executes through all his efforts are directed towards the target, but simply the correct exercise of his craft.²⁵

Here, though, one must immediately avoid the theory is committed to there being two ultimate goods. Take the case of

²⁵ Cf. also Plut. *Comm. in not.* 1071 B–C, 1072 E–F; Carneades and the Stoics, 1069 C–D, 1071 A–B, etc.).

Aristo's wise man, with no material on which his wisdom might be exercised. In fact, even the decision of a Sage to commit suicide will, according to the *De finibus* account, be determined by the balance of indifferents in his situation: 'It is the appropriate action to live when most of what one has is in accordance with nature. When the opposite is the case, or is envisaged to be so, then the appropriate action is to depart from life' (*Fin.* 3. 60).²² In deciding whether or not to commit suicide, both a Sage and a non-Sage may avail themselves of such a principle: so far as we can tell from *De finibus* 3, the deliberations of the two will differ only in spirit (the Sage will be calm, detached, and fearless, knowing as he does that life and the other indifferents are neither good nor bad) and in accuracy (for only the Sage's decisions are informed by the craft or science of living).

Like the Stoic response to Aristo and the *telos* formulae of Dio- genes and Antipater, Cicero's insistence on the continued centrality of the indifferents for decision-making strongly suggests that all rational actions may be parsed as selections of indifferents, a principle I will refer to as the *exhaustiveness of selection*. Indeed, it seems that all the *considerations* involved in deliberations are evidently considerations regarding the indifferents as such, i.e. as bearers of value and disvalue. I will call this closely related (but arguably stronger) principle *deliberative sufficiency*.²³ The upshot of this pair of principles is that, as John Cooper has put it, virtue turns out to be a 'formal' condition: 'All the specific, substantive content of this state of mind—everything that determines what the virtuous person wants, cares about, makes an object of pursuit or avoidance in his actions, etc.—is drawn from the list of "preferred" and "avoided" (or "rejected") things.'²⁴

²² Cf. Plut. *Stoic. repugn.* 1042 B (with an attribution to Chrysippus). The position is of course an attempt to deal with an awkward question: given that the Sage is, *ex officio*, perfectly happy, and every non-Sage unhappy, is not suicide always irrational for the former and always rational for the latter? Other sources give what seem to be very different criteria for determining when suicide is an appropriate action. See SVF iii. 757–68, and J. M. Cooper, 'Greek Philosophers on Euthanasia and Suicide' [*Euthanasia*], in id., *Reason and Emotion* (Princeton, 1999), 515–41.

²³ In addition to the evidence for these principles provided by the *telos* formulae and the response to Aristo, it is worth noting that both seem to be assumed by the critics of the Stoic *telos*, including Alexander ('it is surely absurd [for the Stoics] to say that virtue applies only to selecting', *De anima* 2. 164 (LS 64B)) and Plutarch (*Comm. in not.* 1069 C–D, 1071 A–B, etc.).

²⁴ Cooper, 'Euthanasia', 534. Cf. also T. Brennan, 'Demoralizing the Stoics' [*Demoralizing*], *Ancient Philosophy*, forthcoming.

one whose task it is to shoot a spear or arrow straight at some target. One's ultimate aim is to do all in one's power to shoot straight, and the same applies with our ultimate good. In this kind of example, it is to shoot straight that one must do all one can; none the less, it is to do all one can to accomplish the task that is really the ultimate aim. It is just the same with what we call the supreme good in life. Actually to hit the target is, as we say, to be selected [*seligendium*] but not sought [*expetendum*]. (Cic. *Fin.* 3. 22)

For a perhaps clearer analogy, consider, as a counterpart to the proficient Stoic, the deliberations and attitudes of an advanced tennis player, meaning one who plays tennis both skilfully and for the right reasons.²⁶ Ask such a person why she hit the particular shot she did in any given situation, and the answer will be a strategic one: given the particular circumstances, it was the most likely to win the point of any shot she could play, or the most likely to set up such a shot. For particular actions within the game of tennis are determined by the aim of winning points, and with them games and matches. But if we reiterate the question at a higher level (or, we might say, 'externally' to the game), asking the player why she cares about winning points, a reasonable answer would be that in a sense she does not care—it is only a game and the points mean nothing—but that she has various reasons for playing tennis, and to play is to play to win. We can imagine a child who would be unable to articulate any such 'higher' motivations, and who might not

²⁶ This account is intended to build on Gisela Striker's in 'Following Nature: A Study in Stoic Ethics', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 9 (1991), 1–73; cf. also Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 7. 2. 1. 24 (presumably following Epict. 2. 5), and M. Frede, 'On the Stoic Conception of the Good', in K. Ierodiakonou (ed.), *Topics in Stoic Philosophy* (Oxford, 1999), 71–94 at 91–2. Striker notes the crucial point that the goal or end of a game (chess, soccer, archery) is not to be identified with what constitutes the intended result within it (31): checkmating one's opponent is not the end of chess, even if it is the aim which governs every move the chess-player makes. However, Striker concedes in the end that 'the comparison of virtue with the skill or craft of a player is still misleading' (32). This is apparently because in a game the performance of players is evaluated—just as in non-stochastic crafts—in terms of their success. The 'best player is the one who wins most often, even though she may occasionally lose. . . . But this shows that the analogy between virtue and the skill of a good player breaks down, since moral evaluation, as was emphasized before, is not based upon success' (33). As I suggest above, this is not quite right: the best player is rather the one who exercises to the highest degree those abilities which are, in general, and all else being equal, most likely to produce victory. The problem is rather, I will try to show, with a more specific feature of the Stoic position, viz. their attempt to identify the craft for which the obtaining of preferred indifferent serves as reference point with virtue of any recognizably moral sort.

even experience them, being simply motivated by a kind of blind competitiveness; but it seems natural to think of that as a starting point to be transformed by experience and reflection. So it is wrong to treat winning points at tennis as the end of playing tennis. The motivational structure is rather the reverse: we play to win in order to play tennis. And an advanced player should have no difficulty in explaining the higher ends attained by playing tennis: to become more fit, for exercise, for the benefits of the sociability and competition involved, for the 'love of the game' and the satisfaction of playing it well. Winning is not even a means to these ends; but *trying* to win is, because it is constitutive of playing the game. Thus the 'internal' aim of winning points remains explanatorily central, in two respects. First, as I have noted, for any player it is the deliberatively sufficient 'reference point' used to arrive at decisions within the game. If I am exercising the craft of tennis, my decisions about what shot to make are entirely governed by considerations about winning points: something has gone *wrong* if we need to invoke the 'higher-order' considerations behind my playing tennis at all. ('Why did you play that shot *that way*?—'To get more exercise'—'Oh, play *properly*!') The other significance of this reference point is that the correct exercise of the craft must be defined in relation to it. This relation cannot be direct: it is not the case that the best player is the one who wins the most often. (If it were, then an Agassi who usually loses to a Sampras would be a poor player, and indeed the most important part of skill in tennis would be skill in choosing opponents one could beat.) Playing well is rather playing in a way which in general—all else being equal and circumstances aside—is likely to result in winning; and skill in tennis is the set of physical and strategic abilities which are actualized in playing well.

Likewise with Stoic virtue. We live happily when we live skilfully, exercising the art of living. The advanced practitioner of that art treats the indifferents as a deliberatively sufficient 'reference point': it is in terms of attempting to obtain them that each of her decisions is arrived at and can be explained. But her goal in doing so is simply the exercise of her skill, though as a child she might well have taken obtaining those indifferents to be desirable in itself. And corresponding to the higher-order ends served by tennis, the advanced Stoic will be able to explain the value of the exercise of her art in terms of rationality, consistency, agreement with nature,

conformity to divine will, and the fulfilment of human nature—the whole rich and complex content provided to the idea of virtuous agency by the apparatus of Stoic theory.

On this model of deliberation a hierarchical superstructure of reasons for action may lurk behind any particular decision, just as it does (or should) behind any shot in tennis. The Sage buys lunch to promote his health—but also in order to do what is appropriate, natural, rational, prudent, and so on. And it seems at least possible that all of these descriptions have motivating force.²⁷ But so long as the latter simply supervene on and reinforce the impulse deliberation has already produced, the principle of deliberative sufficiency—and with it the understanding of virtue as a 'formal' condition, rather than one which figures as salient within Stoic deliberation itself—still effectively holds. On this reading, the Stoic distinction between 'selection' (*ἐκλογή*), which takes for its objects the indifferents, and 'choice' (*αἰρέσις*), which properly is applied only to the good, is one not between actions, but between these 'first-order' and 'higher-order' descriptions and impulses.²⁸ An act of selection may also be a 'choice': and, on the interpretation I have been developing, it is by deciding on selections that the Sage discovers how to choose. He seeks to perform actions which are appropriate (*καθήκον*); he hopes to reason well, so as to achieve a harmonious agreement with nature; and his grasp of nature, human and cosmic, directs him to identify happiness with virtue, to fulfil his social duties, to treat his fellow humans as kin, and to embrace whatever Fate sends his way. But, like the complex reasons which may lie behind the practice of playing tennis, none of these con-

²⁷ In particular, we are told that there is a class of impulses which have real goods as their object, namely 'wish', or rational desire, *βούλησις* (D.L. 7. 116); and since virtue and right action are good things, the Sage presumably acquires a new wish whenever he recognizes that some action on his part would be right. Since impulses cause us to act, this rational wish must be a cause of the subsequent action, so the Sage's actions seem to be overdetermined: one impulse causes his purchase of lunch *qua* selection of indifferents, while another, quite different, impulse causes the same purchase *qua* right action. (For right action as a good—ontologically awkward though that may be on Stoic assumptions—cf. Stob. ii. 71. 15–72. 3 (with the canonical example of prudent walking, cf. ii. 96. 18–97. 5); Plut. *Stoic. repugn.* 1042 E–F (citing Chrysippus); Clem. *Strom.* 6. 12 (SVF iii. 110); D.L. 7. 94; and Cic. *Fin.* 3. 55.) Cf. T. Brennan, 'The Old Stoic Theory of Emotions', in J. Sihvola and T. Engberg-Pedersen (eds.), *The Emotions in Hellenistic Philosophy* (Dordrecht, 1998), 21–70, and 'Demoralizing'.

²⁸ For the careful distinction drawn by the Stoics between 'choice' (*αἰρέσις*) and 'selection' (*ἐκλογή*), cf. Stob. ii. 75. 1–6, ii. 78. 7–12, ii. 79. 1–4; Plut. *Stoic. repugn.* 1042 D–E; *Comm. not.* 1060 C, 1061 A; Inwood, *Ethics*, 238–40.

siderations need figure in his first-order deliberations about how to behave in any given situation.

The game analogy shows that there is nothing *formally* impossible about a craft whose reference point is different from its end, and whose immediate end consists in its own exercise. Nor is it structurally impossible for a craft, with a low or trivial reference point to serve more exalted ends. The life in agreement with nature *could* have that structure. But in the Stoic case there is, I will argue, something *substantively* puzzling about the content to be fitted to this model. For if the 'reference point' of the craft of living is the obtaining of the preferred indifferents—if this is what it is to win points at the game of life—then the skills which make up that craft seem most unlikely to resemble human virtue in any recognizable sense. To put it another way, the principle of deliberative sufficiency implies that any 'higher-order' reasons for action acquired by the Stoic are, we might say, *non-relevant*: they supervene on and reinforce the reasons for action already provided by the reference point of selection. But if the higher-order reasons we acquire by making moral progress involve the whole machinery of Stoic ethical theory, then they are hardly likely to leave our tendencies to select the preferred indifferents where they were; and if they did, they could hardly issue in the actions of which the Stoics in fact approve.

I

For consider some of the results which Stoic deliberation is expected to reach. Standard instances of 'appropriate actions' (*καθήκοντα*), for instance, include fulfilling one's social roles and obligations to kin and country, returning a deposit, discovering the truth, not harming others except in response to injustice, and returning favours (D.L. 7. 108–9; Cic. *Fin.* 3. 59; *Off.* 1. 15–20, 47–8). And actions which according to the Stoics are wrong, under normal circumstances, include the following: betraying one's country, showing violence to one's parent, and stealing from temples (Cic. *Fin.* 3. 32); also stealing—even food from another person when you are starving—if you do it simply for your own sake (Cic. *Off.* 3. 29), or grabbing someone else's life-raft in a shipwreck (*Off.* 3. 89). On the contrary, you should let another more socially useful person have the life-raft (*Off.* 3. 89–90) you should behave with the ring

of Gyges as you would without it (*Off.* 3. 38–9); and if need be you should offer yourself as a hostage to face torture for the good of your country (*Off.* 3. 99–115).

This last case provides the peroration of Cicero's *De officiis*, by far our richest source of reasonably concrete information on what actions the Stoics approve. Here Cicero discusses the story of Regulus, who as consul was taken prisoner by the Carthaginians and sent back to Rome, having sworn an oath that he would return to Carthage unless some Carthaginian hostages were returned. When Regulus got to Rome he followed the Carthaginians' instructions; but he also argued in the Senate *against* returning the hostages, as being against Rome's best interest. His authority prevailed and the captives were retained; Regulus himself kept his oath and returned to Carthage. According to Cicero, he realized when he did so that he was going 'to a very cruel enemy and most sophisticated torture' (*Off.* 3. 100).²⁹ Why, then, did he go, and rightly according to Cicero? Because justice demands that even oaths to an enemy be kept. And why did he recommend retaining the hostages, dooming himself to a grisly death? Because it would not have been beneficial to his country to hand the hostages back. Therefore for Regulus to recommend against doing so was honourable; and since the honourable is always beneficial, Regulus himself was, all appearances to the contrary, better off for his decision.

So my puzzle is this, and an embarrassingly crude one it is: how can Regulus' actions be parsed as instances of the selection of indifferents? For that matter, precisely what consideration, figuring in the deliberation of a practising Stoic, would preclude her selecting the preferred indifferent of wealth by robbing temples? The doctrine of the indifferents can explain why the Sage buys lunch, and a nutritious lunch at that; but it seems to remain utterly silent about the dimension of Stoicism which enjoins law-abidingness, justice, philanthropy, resistance to tyranny, and, in general, what from a non-Stoic point of view looks like selfless behaviour. Yet in Section I we saw good reasons for attributing to the Stoics the principles of the exhaustiveness of selection and the deliberative sufficiency of the indifferents: and in that case, whatever actions the doctrine of selection cannot account for, it excludes.

To see just how bad the problem is, it will help to bring out

²⁹ Translations from *De officiis* are from Cicero, *On Duties*, ed. M. T. Griffin and E. M. Atkins (Cambridge, 1991).

some assumptions left lurking in the background of what I gave in Section I—and, so far as I can see, lurking in the background of most expositions of Stoicism, ancient and modern alike. To begin with, recall Aristotle's first argument, based on the case of the person who rationally prefers sickness to being killed. As I noted, the Stoic response is that in particular cases we must consider 'preferred' and 'dispreferred' indifferent types, and allow that some particular token of a type may be dispreferred under special circumstances and some other token of the same type may be preferred. In other words, some indifferents may *outweigh* other indifferents, the overall outcome ill-health-and-convalescence being clearly preferable to the outcome good-health-and-early-death. And the need to weigh indifferents against another must be a pervasive, salient feature of deliberation. It is difficult to think of actions in which only a single indifferent is involved: Sage buys lunch, he must judge that the advantage in doing so outweighs the diminution of his wealth; necessarily 'all things considered': what is rationally dispreferred can only be assessed in context. Hence the doctrine of appropriate actions which depend on circumstances: under special circumstances it may be appropriate to multiply and give away one's fortune (D.L. 7. 109). Hence too Cicero's claim that the Sage's decision to commit suicide will depend on whether he has more of preferred and dispreferred indifferents in his life of 3. 60).

Such reasoning implies the adoption of a calculus: we are able to weigh the indifferents which may figure in our deliberation. That must be at least one respect in which Stoic selection requires 'reasoning well' (*eùλογιστεῖν*), as per the formula: it is at least in part because he has masted his calculus, and can correctly reckon all the features of a course against each other, that the Sage's selections are perceived as rational. How this calculus might work is left obscure by our sources: but that all preferred indifferents have 'value' (*ἀξία*) and that all dispreferred indifferents have 'disvalue' (*ἀπαξία*) and that the ratio of the two is the denominator in terms of which various packages of indifferents may be compared. (And clearly different amounts of value must accrue

³⁰ Cf. B. Inwood and P. Donini, 'Stoic Ethics', in K. Algra, J. B. Cooper, and M. Schofield (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1999), 675–738 at 695–7.

to tokens of a single type of indifferent which differ in quantity or degree: to say that wealth is preferred means that more of it is, all else being equal, preferred over less.)

So, on this reading, selection requires weighing against each other the quantities of value and disvalue likely to be obtained in action. And this suggests that a rational selection will be one in which the agent selects an option whose value is not outweighed by any other, i.e. one which maximizes value—or expected value, since the Stoics emphasize that it is not the outcome of an action which matters for our assessment of it, but the skill or lack of skill exercised in our decisions. Talk of maximization is not to be found in our texts, and may sound suspiciously anachronistic. However, the ideal of an art of deliberation which would consist in the ability correctly to reckon value, so as to maximize it, goes back to Plato's *Protagoras*. In a famous and influential passage, Socrates there argues that 'no one who knows or believes there is something else better than what he is doing, something possible, will go on doing what he had been doing when he could be doing what is better' (358 C);³¹ and he sketches a vision of a deliberative art of measurement (*ἡ μετρητικὴ τέχνη*, 356 D ff.) as 'our salvation in life'. For by rationally reckoning harms and benefits against each other, this art will enable us to select the value-maximizing course of action on a systematic and reliable basis (353 C-358 E). And there can be little doubt that, like the *Euthydemus* and *Meno* arguments discussed earlier, this passage had a profound influence on the Stoic conception of virtue as a rational art or skill of living.

A final respect in which the notion of 'selecting indifferents' is usually left ambiguous is in the relation of the indifferents to the agent. The question here is, again, an obvious and crude one: *whose* health etc. does the Sage select? Is 'selection' a procedure which aims at getting its object into one's own grasp ('agent-relative', as I will term it), or something more impartial or 'agent-neutral'? The point is one on which accounts of Stoicism, ancient and modern alike, tend to be bizarrely vague.³² But there is considerable piece-

³¹ Trans. S. Lombardo and J. J. Bell, in Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. J. Cooper, assoc. ed. D. S. Hutchinson (Indiana polis, 1997). A descendant of this principle seems to be adopted by the Stoics, though their distinction between the good and the valuable significantly complicates matters: cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 4, 12-14; Epict. 3, 3.

³² We might be tempted to infer *ex silentio* that 'selection'/disselection' need not be on behalf of or in the interest of anybody at all: that it is simply a way of characterizing the manipulation of indifferents which almost any agency in the world

meal evidence that we are to understand selection as the selection of indifferents for the agent himself. (1) Though 'selection' (*ἐκλογή*) and cognates are rather colourless terms, the Stoics do talk about the preferred indifferents as 'to-be-taken' (*ληπτόν*, 'one's own take'), which strongly suggests getting something, or one's own grasp; and Antipater seems to paraphrase 'selection', saying that we should 'do everything to obtain [*τυγχάνειν*]' the things in accordance with nature. (2) The opponents of the Stoics argue that it is absurd to hold that the end consists in 'selection' rather than in the actual obtaining of what is selected; and the Stoics defend their conception of the *telos* accept both the relevance of the selecting/obtaining contrast and, it seems, the understanding that this is roughly the contrast between impulse and successful outcome.³³ (3) In the seminal Platonic arguments at *Meno* 87 B-C and *Euthydemus* 278 E-281 E, it is clearly an agent's own possession of the 'goods' which is in question (note *Meno* 77 C 7-8, where Socrates stipulates that in these contexts 'desire' means 'desire for oneself'). (4) Recall Aristo's argument that health would not be deemed 'preferred': as the Stoics are expected to weigh *my* health against *my* life in selecting sickness over the draft. (5) When the theory of the indifferents is put to work in the developmental exposition of *De finibus* 3, the initial approach which they ground are presented as agent-relative: this is never revisited or revised. Indeed, Cicero's people by nature love themselves . . . the foolish will adopt what is in accordance with nature and wise will adopt what is in accordance with nature and contrary' (3, 59). (6) Accordingly, as already noted, it is also assumed in the *De finibus* account of when selection is reasonable (3, 60-1).

These clues add up, I believe, to good prima facie grounds for us to take 'selection' as an impulse to get the object selected into one's grasp. In that case, the *telos* formula of Diogenes Laertius will involve some use of the language of 'selection' to emphasize that the Sage's activity is not indifferent to redistribution, so to speak, of items in the world which are the objects of selection, with which that redistribution (whatever shape it may take) is performed. However, it is hard to make sense of the distinction between selection and disselection of the evidence above for an agent-relative understanding of 'selection' if it is not.

³³ Cf. LS § 64 *passim*; SVF iii. 190-6 *passim*; and in particular the polemics of Plutarch, *Comm. not.* 1068 F-1072 F.

one's own grasp. And with this and the other noted in place, we now have a reasonably full 'selection of indifferent' seems to involve:

- (1) *Some equations*. For deliberative purpose, concordance with nature' are the bearers of preference, i.e. the preferred indifferents; the 'thing preferred' are the bearers of (sufficient) 'disvalue' indifferents.
- (2) *Exhaustiveness*. All actions can be described as either in accord with nature or not.
- (3) *Deliberative sufficiency*. Deliberation in accord with nature is sufficient for selection of value and disvalue.
- (4) *Maximization*. A correct deliberation is (reasonably expected) value.
- (5) *Agent-relativity*. Selection is selection for one to get what is selected into one's own grasp understood in terms of maximization for oneself.

I shall call (1)-(5) the Maximization Model of Stoic deliberation. On this model, the Stoic's deliberative task is to determine which selection, of those open to him, is best with as much overall value as possible. His decision is to be governed by a sort of ersatz egoistic concern that, like the selection of course his aim in selection is to maximize overall mysterious entity 'value' rather than happiness, directly contributes to it.

This sounds alarmingly unlike the views of Stoicism, and it is hard not to suspect that's off the rails badly wrong. The starkest difficulty is of course account I outlined in Section I, the Maximization Model account for the results the Stoics expect a wide range of deliberative procedures could ground decisions, but this is not one of them.³⁴ The precisely where the Maximization Model goes have tried to show, each of its constitutive prop-

³⁴ The problem is not that the Maximization Model is 'egoistic' to be authentically Stoic—Cicero insists that action was beneficial, i.e. happiness-promoting, to him that such heroic actions cannot be parsed as agent-relative

grounded in the relation of Maximization and deliberation is?

III

Here and in the following two sections I consider some interpretations of the 'selection', ones more easily made with heroic than with philanthropic action. The simplest solution intact the special features of the Maximization Model proposition (5) listed above, and simply reconsider of the preferred and dispreferred indifferents. Some scholars have argued that it to have been tempted by this solution (Stob. ii. 81.1; D.L. 7.117-7). To endorse Regulan behaviour stipulate that the amount of progress has so great an outweigh over indifferents; so the Stoic deliberation will always be the morally 'right' sort of results.

However, this is clearly the wrong kind of solution progress cannot be fully figure as a ground-level consideration: for progress morally by performing appropriate actions, and which would be appropriate is what deliberation find out. Moral progress is no longer available, so it could be in his deliberations as preferred (Stob. ii. 81.1; D.L. 7.117-7). To endorse Regulan behaviour stipulate that the amount of progress has so great an outweigh over indifferents; so the Stoic deliberation will always be the morally 'right' sort of results.

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That moral progress figures in some lists of the indifferentes shows, I think, that the Stoics themselves felt at least a flickering discomfort about the puzzle I have identified. Still, it has the distinct air of an afterthought, not to mention a category mistake. A more elegant and promising alternative, which also leaves much of the Maximization Model in place, is suggested by Adam Smith's exposition of the Stoic theory in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. (I say 'suggested by' because my presentation will somewhat exaggerate and oversimplify Smith's account: my interest here is primarily in the menu of alternatives.)³⁶ Smith's approach is to incorporate other-regarding concerns into deliberation by conceiving of 'selection' as, ideally, an impartial procedure:

Among those primary objects which nature had recommended to us as eligible, was the prosperity of our family, of our relations, of our friends, of our country, of mankind, and of the universe in general. Nature, too, had taught us, that as the prosperity of two was preferable to that of one, that of many, or of all, must be infinitely more so. That we ourselves were

58-9, etc.). These descriptions are puzzling, but the *principal* idea seems to be that under any reasonably informative description ('returning a deposit'), appropriate actions will be 'between' or common to both Sages and non-Sages (cf. Cic. *Fin.* 3. 59; *Off.* 3. 14-15), and that appropriate action as available to the non-Sage is not a good. Some passages, notably Cic. *Fin.* 3. 58-60, tie this 'intermediate' status to the indifferentes in a way that suggests that appropriate actions should themselves be understood as indifferentes, presumably 'preferred' ones. However, as such they, like progress, would not be available to the Sage (since his appropriate actions, being 'perfected', are genuinely good)—again with absurd results, if the point is to 'moralize' deliberation. Moreover, Stoic lists of preferred indifferentes are consistently of states or objects (health, wealth) to be obtained through action: action-types themselves do not seem to be the right *kind* of item to be included here. In sect. v I consider a more promising strategy for incorporating considerations of the *καθῆκον* into deliberations about selection.

³⁶ Smith's exposition occupies chapters 7. 2. 1. 15-47 of the *Theory*: it is by far the longest exposition of any earlier moral system, and makes clear the profound influence of Stoicism on Smith's own views. Given the depth of that influence, his account, which draws principally on *De finibus* 3 and Epicurus, is remarkably accurate and still helpful; but there are certainly moments of philosophical projection. Epicurus' demand that we see our own interests in terms of the good of the whole is expounded in terms of viewing our interests 'with the eyes of others', and with reference to Smith's own account of justice in terms of an impartial spectator (7. 2. 1. 19, note A). Of the Sage, Smith says: 'All his affections were absorbed and swallowed up in two great affections: in that for the discharge of his own duty, and in that for the greatest possible happiness of all rational and sensible beings' (7. 2. 1. 21). And he continues: 'For the gratification of this latter affection, he rested with the most perfect security upon the wisdom and power of the great Superintendent of the universe.' This understanding of Stoic holism and providence is surely a major source of Smith's own notorious faith in the 'invisible hand' of capitalism.

but one, and consequently wherever our prosperity was inconsistent with that of the whole, or of any considerable part of the whole, it ought, even upon choice, to yield to what was so vastly preferable. ('Of System: Moral Philosophy', *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 7. 2. 1. 18)

Smith here heavily on the Stoic picture of moral progress as requiring an expanding circle of *oikeiōsis*, 'appropriation': the Stoics identify their interests as my own. There is far more to be said about this central Stoic doctrine, and the Stoics' concomitant insistence on the naturalness of human sociability and philanthropy. I can enter into here: for our purposes, the important question is exactly how the associated motivations are to be integrated into deliberation. The extreme difficulty of parsing considerations founded on *oikeiōsis* and community in terms of the Maximization Model is in effect what the example of Regulus brought out: a great advantage of Smith's model is that it provides a clear procedure for explaining how such considerations can indeed figure in Stoic deliberation: in making selections, we are to prefer the greater 'prosperity' of the greater number. The Maximization Model held that Stoic talk of selection comes with, as it were, the explicit date of interest: my selections are selections *at* that date. On Smith's model, this is replaced by something along the following lines:

(5') *Age of selection*. I select what maximizes value *impartially*.

Smith's model in which Stoicism turns out to be a kind of quasi-utilitarianism is some tremendous advantages. It retains the well-supported positions (1)-(4) of the Maximization Model, but shows how they may be reconciled with central Stoic doctrines about *oikeiōsis*, justice, and human fellowship: thus, unlike Maximization, it yields the behaviour which the Stoics actually want. It shows how the Sage's refusal of the life-raft could be parsed as a rational rejection of 'indifferentes', and how virtue might consist precisely in making such selections correctly.

So it is a surprise that Smith's model seems to be at work in a number of recent interpretations. As Julia Annas puts it, 'a person who has developed towards virtue and extended the circles of social o

reason to prefer these things impartially, that is, at the least without arbitrary limitations to particular people'.³⁷ What is odd, of course, and should give us pause, is that the Stoics themselves never say anything quite like this. That tantalizingly simple 'for everyone' is never supplied. Rather, when the language of *oikeiōsis* or justice enters, the language of selection generally departs.

The passages which come closest to being evidence for Smith's model come from Cicero. In *De finibus* he says (in what may well be the passage Smith has in mind): 'The Stoics hold that the universe is ruled by divine will, and that it is virtually a single city and state shared by humans and gods. Each one of us is a part of this universe. It follows naturally from this that we value the common good more than our own [*communem utilitatem nostrae anteponamus*]' (3. 64). Just what this means is rather unclear: *utilitas* is not Cicero's official term for 'value' [*aestimatio*], or for the 'benefits' [*commoda*] provided by what is 'preferred' [*praeposita*] (cf. 3. 50-3, 3. 69). Still, the general commitment to impartiality seems clear, and is ringingly reaffirmed in *De officiis*, where *utilitas* seems to be 'benefit' in an ambiguous sense applicable to both the preferred indifferents and the genuinely good (cf. Section V below). Here Cicero even suggests that to determine what is appropriate a quasi-utilitarian form of deliberation may be necessary: 'promises should not be kept if they are disadvantageous to those to whom you have made them. Nor, if they harm you more than they benefit the person whom you have promised, is it contrary to duty to prefer the greater good to the lesser' (*Off.* 1. 32). Thus *prima facie* duties are only that; what determines our real duties, it seems, are their consequences, with the 'harms' and 'benefits' impartially calculated.

So, despite the mysterious failure of our texts to supply the crucial 'dative', and the contrary evidence I noted in Section I for the agent-relative reading of 'selection', Smith's model is not wholly without textual support. And it provides what looks like a suitably central and direct role for the 'other-regarding' concerns involved in the central Stoic doctrines of *oikeiōsis*, philanthropy, and justice.³⁸

³⁷ *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford, 1993), 307, cf. 173-4. Cf. also Richard Sorabji's discussion of the attitudes of a Stoic employer: things in accordance with nature 'would include health and money both for yourself and for your workers' (*Animal Minds and Human Morals* (Ithaca, 1993), 139). I do not mean to imply, though, that either Annas or Sorabji intends to adopt Smith's model to the exclusion of the others I consider here.

³⁸ 'Other-regarding' may not be quite the right term here; but I take it that it

However, Smith's model also raises some philosophical complications worth bearing in mind. For one thing, there is perhaps something not quite right about his talk of 'two being preferable to one', and Annas's of 'impartiality'.³⁹ It is not just that complete impartiality is attained, if at all, only by the Sage, and that there seem to be some (perhaps many) contexts in which it is not called for at all (recall Seneca's blithe selection of elegant clothes for himself, not to mention the elaborate Stoic theory of the differing duties we owe to kin, country, etc.). For I advance in *oikeiōsis* when I come to think of others as *oikeiōti*, adopting them into my house. It is not that the Stoic is impartial, counting himself as one and not more than one; rather, he *identifies* the interests of others with his own. So though Smith's model manages to give *oikeiōsis*-based considerations the centrality they deserve, it seems to me to get them subtly wrong.

Smith's model gains a specious plausibility from its kinship with certain central notions of modern ethics: that morality is essentially linked to universalization and so to a kind of impartiality, that justice regulates the distribution of goods, that moral progress involves recognizing that there is no magic in the pronoun 'my'. What standing these thoughts have in ancient philosophy, if any, is a difficult and complicated problem. But one particular respect in which we should be wary of importing modern assumptions is clear. We might be tempted to read ideas of impartiality into the crucial account in *De finibus* 3 of the evolution of appropriate action, according to which I move from an attachment to particular 'things in accordance with nature' to an attachment to reason as what is most natural for me, so that my interest is redirected from those objects of pursuit to the exercise of rational agency itself (3. 20-3). It is difficult for us not to imagine that sort of transformation as involving a powerful move towards impartiality: in grasping that I am above all a rational agent, surely part of what I must acquire

is *not* an objection to Smith's model that it renders Stoic deliberation formally non-egoistic. As now seems to be generally accepted, ancient eudaimonism can incorporate a genuine taking into account of the interests of others; and I see no reason why this could not be expressed in formally non-egoistic deliberation, like that of a craftsman at work. For a systematic reading of Stoic virtue in terms of this (ultimately Platonic: cf. *Rep.* 345 E-347 A; *Tim.* 28 B-30 C) conception of craft motivation, see S. Menn, 'Physics as a Virtue', *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, 11 (1995), 1-34.

³⁹ Cf. B. Inwood, review of J. Annas, *The Morality of Happiness*, in *Ancient Philosophy*, 15 (1995), 647-65 at 661-3.

is a recognition that, objectively, as a rational agent I am no different from any other, and that reason itself gives me interests no special standing. However, it is clear that none of this is in play in the transformation depicted in *De finibus*; rather, what I attain in coming to value rational agency more highly than the indifferent is simply the right conception of my own happiness. So exactly where and how philanthropic and heroic motivations operate within Stoic deliberation remains, I think, to be identified.

IV

A popular alternative solution is what I will call the Dualist Model. This involves the rejection of propositions (2) and (3) of the Maximization Model above: not all actions are selections, if this implies that they take into consideration only indifference *qua* indifferent. Rather, the Stoic's deliberation is a two-tiered business: he must first decide whether 'moral' considerations demand any action under the circumstances, and only if not—if he turns out to be literally off duty—does he go through the deliberations of the Maximizer.

Some of our texts do talk as though the selection of indifferent can at times be superseded by a different kind of agency. As Stobaeus explicates 'selective value', it is according to this that, *when circumstances permit*, we choose these particular things instead of those, for instance health instead of disease, life instead of death, wealth instead of poverty' (ii. 83. 14–84. 1 (LS 58)), they emphasize). The Maximization Model can see in this merely an allusion to the all-things-considered nature of selection. But we could also read the relevant circumstances as including the absence of any contrary 'duty'—i.e. any of the appropriate actions prescribed by our social roles, human fellowship and *nikê ôvris*, or other 'moral' considerations. The point of doing so, of course, is that the Dualist Model seems sufficiently elastic to give the right range of results. It allows what must be right if Stoicism is to be seen as a coherent system: that in some situations it is appropriate to select elegant clothes, and in others to die for one's country.

Something along the lines of the Dualist Model figures in a number of scholarly interpretations. As Long and Sedley put it, the

locutions 'to-be-taken' and 'to-be-selected' express 'the attitude a Stoic should adopt towards AN things [things in accordance with nature] which happen to be available . . . and which he can take or select without compromising his moral principles' (LS i. 58).⁴⁰ Likewise Inwood: 'An adult continues to pursue those things which are preferred, but always in such a way that in case of a conflict with his pursuit of the good the impulse to the good will override his selection of the preferred thing' (*Ethics*, 210).⁴¹

Like Adam Smith's reading, the Dualist Model has a strikingly modern air. In this case the prophetic aspect of Stoicism is discovered by the dualism of practical reason: duty and inclination (or something resembling them) have their separate spheres, and the former speaks with authority. Though this may raise suspicions of anachronism, these should not, I think, be sufficient to disqualify this model. For the performance of 'duty' is still, in the Stoic case, governed by the eudaimonistic framework of the theory as a whole. Only by performing appropriate actions can I promote my own happiness: so the Stoics, even so read, have arguably come no closer to treating the two spheres of practical reason as *fundamentally* autonomous than Plato or Aristotle. Just as the Dualist Stoic is only quasi-utilitarian, the 'Dualist' Stoic is most pseudo-Kantian.

So the charge of anachronism is not in itself a powerful objection to this reading. A more serious problem is that, as Tad Brennan has convincingly argued, it is hard to see how a contrast between overriding 'duty' and the inclination to select preferred indifferent could be presented within any coherent and recognizable

⁴⁰ Cf. also Bonhöffer, *Epictetus*, 43: we must 'weigh the values against some other . . . and, in the event a specific moral good is not at stake . . . prefer what is according to nature to what is contrary to nature'.

⁴¹ Presumably the 'impulse to the good' here includes a progressing Stoic's efforts to perform appropriate actions. More recently, Inwood has pressed this 'overriding' relation as being on a continuum with the way in which the value of one indifferent outweighs another: 'They [the indifferents] are generally the object of an agent's efforts and activities, although the value of pursuing preferred things can be overridden. . . . It could be that the pursuit of wealth in a given case will impair other interests, such as the preservation of one's health or the development of virtue. . . . Most important of all, some indifferents will tend to hinder the acquisition of virtue and some will (at least sometimes) tend to hinder it; the mind the ultimate importance of the good will aid with such choices' (*Stoic Ethics*, 694–5). This is perhaps closer to the Degrees of Nature model I consider in the next section.

ably Stoic model of deliberation.⁴² For the word we need to translate 'duty' in this context is simply *καθήκον*; and correct selections of the indifferent are instances—indeed central, canonical instances—of *καθήκοντα*. So it is unclear under what description the Sage would perceive overriding duties as such. Nor do our sources hint at any such category. On the contrary: as I noted earlier, we have significant textual evidence for the claims that selections are *exhaustive* of actions and that considerations about indifferents are *sufficient* for all deliberations. To recall only one obstacle to the Dualist Model, the *telos* formulations of Antipater and Diogenes, which speak only of selection, would turn out to be radically incomplete, as descriptions of only one class of action—and the less salient one, by being less distinctive of the Sage and the progressing Stoic, at that. Bonhöffer for one seems at times prepared to bite the necessary bullet and conclude that Diogenes and Antipater have left orthodoxy behind: 'What the Middle Stoa in a one-sided manner made the sole end of the human being, namely the rational selection of the things according to nature, in Epictetus has its correct position as a sphere of moral action beside others' (*Epictetus*, 42–3).⁴³ But it seems to me unthinkable that the doxographic tradition (including the polemic of the Stoics' keen-eyed enemies) would fail to mark this heresy as such—unthinkable that Cicero could at *Fin.* 3. 31 treat the *telos* formulae of Chrysippus, Diogenes, and Zeno as if they were all one and the same. And in that case, the Dualist Model cannot be right either.

V

One option remains. This is to reject the equations I introduced at the outset as thesis (1) of the Maximization Model: that is, to deny that 'the things in accordance with nature' (*τὰ κατὰ φύσιν*), as they figure in contexts related to 'selection', are to be identified with

⁴² For Brennan's arguments against the Dualist (or as he puts it, the *Salva Virtute*) Model see 'Demoralizing'.

⁴³ At the same time, Bonhöffer seems to realize the implausibility of ascribing such a fundamental heterodoxy to these scholars: 'even those older Stoics, when they . . . defined the *telos* one-sidedly as conduct according to reason in the selection of what is according to nature, still, exactly like Epictetus, must have considered the rational operation of the *hēgemonikon* in fact as the supreme goal and must have delimited and regulated that rationality (*ἐπιλογιστήριον*) by means of the duties that are moral in and by themselves' (*Epictetus*, 44).

the preferred indifferents. Perhaps we should say instead that the preferred indifferents are only a *subset* of the things in accordance with nature, and, in particular, that the appropriate actions enjoined on us by justice, by our social roles, and by the naturalness of human fellowship and *oikeiōsis* are all *more* 'in accordance with nature' than any preferred indifferent.⁴⁴ Thus we may incorporate *oikeiōsis*-based considerations directly into deliberation, in what I will term the 'Degrees of Nature' model:

- (1') For deliberative purposes, the preferred indifferents are a subset of the 'things in accordance with nature' and the dispreferred indifferents are a subset of the 'things contrary to nature'. Other things in accordance with nature include all appropriate actions.⁴⁵
- (2') All actions can be described as selections among 'things in accordance with nature' and 'things contrary to nature'.
- (3') All deliberations are about selections, and weigh things in accordance with nature and contrary to nature as such.
- (4') A correct selection is one which produces the action *most* in accordance with nature.

This improves on the Dualist Model in that it does not introduce a *fundamental* dichotomy between selections and other kinds of actions, and can thus make sense of the *telos* formulae of Diogenes and Antipater. On the Degrees of Nature model, there is a uniformity to the Stoic's deliberations: all aim at selecting what is *most* in accordance with nature given the circumstances. In some cases that will be the wearing of elegant clothes, in others the sacrifice of one's life for one's country; and moral progress will generally be a matter of coming to recognize the greater accordance-with-nature of the weightier, 'moral'-looking considerations at the top of the scale. Inasmuch as these weightier motivations derive from Stoic doctrines about social responsibility, human fellowship, and *oikeiōsis*, this model can reach the same desirable results as the

⁴⁴ We might or might not want to allow that such things are, like preferred indifferents, bearers of 'value'; I will hedge my bets on that question in what follows.

⁴⁵ Obviously for the Degrees of Nature model to be viable, we (and the deliberating Stoic) must have sufficient information about what actions are appropriate, independent of the doctrine of the indifferents and their selection, for this to be a substantive and independent deliberative principle. A starting point would be Epictetus' deduction of appropriate actions from our 'names' (i.e. identities and social roles) in 2. 10.