

EMOTION AND PEACE OF MIND

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Richard Sorabji's new book on the emotions is another brilliant, astounding production, exciting in the breadth of its coverage, terrifying in the scope of its learning. Although its topics are closer to that of his relatively slim volume on *Animal Minds and Human Morals* (1993)—psychology, action theory and ethics—its size and ambitions are a return to the mammoth scale of his earlier surveys of ancient physical and metaphysical theory: *Necessity, Cause and Blame* (1980); *Matter, Space, and Motion* (1983); and *Time, Creation and the Continuum* (1988—is a trio of triads an ennead?). As with all of his books, this one not only stakes out positions on a host of familiar debates, it also creates new debates, on new topics and new texts that few or none had known about.

For decades now, Sorabji has been ancient philosophy's Columbus, always pushing ahead to find new worlds, and bringing back reports of the riches to be found therein. He has repeatedly redrawn the map of our discipline, and enlarged it every time, so that its boundaries at the beginning of this millennium would strike awe and terror into the stay-at-home hearts of the parochial Plato and Aristotle scholars of a half-century ago. The measure of Sorabji's effect is not merely that one finds oneself introduced to unfamiliar figures—Evagrius and Makarios, Peter of Poitiers and Paulinus of Nola, plus a whole gregation of Gregorys—it is that one finds oneself engaged in their debates, and engaging them in debate while reading. Far from being exhibited as silent hostages from distant lands, they are each allowed to speak to their best advantage, shown to be intelligible and intelligent contributors to debates that involve us too. In this regard Sorabji far surpasses the great explorers of the seafaring age, since he puts it beyond doubt that the inhabitants of all of these distant lands and traditions are fully human, and deserving of our greatest respect.

Sorabji's books also resemble voyages of exploration in being communal projects; but here the more apposite metaphor is drawn from scientific endeavours. Sorabji has always been something of a scientist, even in this most central of humanistic disciplines. It is not merely that he is comfortable and conversant with the results and methods of many modern sciences—he has larded every one of his books with references to up-to-date scientific research, whether on quantum physics or on the neurophysiology of fear. It is also that he is animated by the scientific spirit, and takes a scientist's approach to the scholarly life. He has managed, by the writing of countless grant applications, to fund a massive scholarly project employing dozens of researchers (the *Ancient Commentators on Aristotle* translation series)—that's an expected thing in the sciences, but otherwise unknown in Ancient Philosophy. He is in constant contact with other researchers, and his footnotes refer

to dozens of conferences at which his work has evolved, record the dozens of suggestions from others that he has incorporated into his work, and the dozens of works in progress by scholars around the globe that he draws on, some of which he himself has instigated or inspired. He pulls together the isolated expertise of many scattered communities, bringing the best Patristic scholars together with leading cognitive therapists on the same page, or in the same seminar room. In short, Sorabji is ancient philosophy's leading Baconian bee, a cheerful empiricist constantly communicating with other workers, learning of fertile fields and directing others unselfishly to them, amassing facts, and distilling them into new syntheses.

I mean this as an expression of the deepest admiration.¹ I also mean it as a confession of defeat. There is no way that an expert in command of only one field—much less someone like me—can hope to pass judgement on the multitude of issues, questions, and debates that are to be found throughout Sorabji's new book. I must leave it to the brain-scientists to assess what Sorabji says about the amygdala; and the Byzantinists will need to make up their own minds about his comments on the wonderfully-named Barlaam of Seminaria, whose acquaintance I had not previously made (though I taught a graduate course a few years ago in which I encountered his brother, Bedlam).

Furthermore, it is a special feature of Sorabji's approach that different kinds of evidence and argumentation are brought into close juxtaposition, at the same time that different sorts of scholarly tasks are being woven together. Sometimes Sorabji is engaged in the purely historical task of reconstructing what some ancient school said, sifting the philological evidence with minute care, and even proposing new emendations of texts. At other points, he argues in his own voice, and by appeal to his own intuitions, for the accuracy of a particular theory of the emotions, or for the utility of a particular kind of therapy. Still elsewhere, history and polemic are combined in the genealogical activity of attempting to show how our current outlook is the result of earlier historical positions and their transmission and distortion. There is a constant feeling of exhilaration and adventure in zooming back and forth through the centuries; there is also the occasional queasy feeling that evidence from one kind of debate is playing an illegitimate role in another. "The reactions of the amygdala system," reads a characteristic sentence (p. 147), "provide the modern counterpart of Posidonius' horses." (Posidonius, writing in about 100 BC, made some use of the image of irrational horses from Plato's *Phaedrus*.) Does my concession above that I don't know my amygdala from my olecranon hereafter debar me from interpreting Posidonius? Or what about when next month's issue of *The Lancet* shows that the scientists he cited misunderstood the amygdala themselves—as is likely to happen in science—: must Sorabji

1. I should disclose that my admiration is hardly distant or impersonal; I was Sorabji's colleague at King's College, London, for four years. I was also an underlabourer in the Commentator's project, contributing a translation of Simplicius's *Commentary on Epicetus' Encheiridion* (jointly translated with Charles Brittain in two volumes; Duckworth and Cornell 2001). And in a typical act of generosity, he encouraged the editors of a collection of essays to commission an article from me on Stoic psychology ('The Old Stoic Theory of Emotions', in J. Sihvola and T. Engberg-Pedersen (eds.), *Emotions in Hellenistic Philosophy* (Kluwer 1998).

rethink his own views of the proper interpretation of some fragmentary papyrus text?

Luckily, even here Sorabji shows us the way. Instead of fretting about my own lack of expertise, or wallowing in methodological scruples, I shall simply plunge into the diachronic melee, dispensing judgements with cheerful unconcern. But before doing so, I should briefly recapitulate the book's main points.

The volume's twenty-six chapters are divided into four sections which are titled as follows (I append rough page-lengths to indicate their relative size):

Emotions as Judgements versus Irrational Forces (approx. 150 pp.)

Value of the Emotions, Cognitive Therapy, and the Role of Philosophy (approx. 150 pp.)

Emotional Conflict and Structure of the Mind (approx. 40 pp.)

From Stoic Agitations to Christian Temptation (approx. 75 pp.).

The first section provides an overview of the Stoic theory of emotions. Sorabji traces a development in the Stoic view, as Chrysippus disagreed with the founder Zeno, Posidonius disagreed with Chrysippus, and Seneca came along to reconcile and tie up loose ends. Sorabji is here bucking a fairly common view according to which all of the leading Stoics throughout the four centuries of its productive life were in rough agreement on the correct analysis of the emotions. On this more homogenised reading of Stoicism, all of the theories are best understood as trivial variations on the Chrysippean orthodoxy (which is by far the best-attested theory in any case), and appearances of dissension have been fabricated or exaggerated by anti-Stoic polemicists such as Galen and Plutarch.

Sorabji is more confident that a few exiguous scraps of Zeno and Posidonius, skilfully doled out to us by professional barrators whose express intention it is to show that the Stoics contradict themselves, can be reassembled into coherent, non-Chrysippean theories. Sorabji is also more confident that Seneca's reports about the emotions represent genuine advances in psychological theorising, instead of irredeemably unphilosophical muddle. Curiously, the one Stoic whom Sorabji has little patience with is the figure whom most of us take to be the Stoa's leading light: Chrysippus. He does very little to explore how Chrysippus could have responded to the various objections raised against him; if anything, he seems eager to tarnish Chrysippus's good name so that his own favourites, Seneca and Posidonius, may shine more brightly.

In the second section, Sorabji takes up the question of 'curing' or treating the emotions, in light of the analyses of them considered in the first section—especially the cognitivist analysis. Here he also considers those ancient thinkers, best exemplified by Aristotle, who thought that emotions are an unavoidable part of human psychology, which can play a valuable role in a fully virtuous life if properly moderated and domesticated. A subordinate theme of this section involves Sorabji's response to Bernard Williams's criticisms of ancient claims about the therapeutic efficacy of philosophy, as those pretensions were put forward in Martha Nussbaum's book *The Therapy of Desire*. Siding with Nussbaum, Sorabji argues that "philosophical analysis contributes

to therapy” in significant ways (p. 160). Aristotelian catharsis may be considered as a sort of therapy for the emotions, and so this topic too occupies a few chapters.

The third section seems the least well-integrated into the rest of the volume. Both of its constituent chapters address interesting topics, and both are full of interesting discussions. But the first one (Ch. 20, ‘Emotional Conflict and the Divided Self’) addresses a topic so central to Stoic psychology that it ought not to have been postponed this late: the fact that the Stoics rejected Plato’s arguments for psychic division, and reverted to the unitary analysis of the soul espoused by Socrates in the *Protagoras*, is in my opinion the very first thing that must be said on the topic of Stoic emotions. The cognitivist analysis of the emotions then becomes a fairly trivial corollary of the unitary, rationalistic analysis of the soul. Even if one rejects that particular dependency claim, this material is an indispensable part of the background for the analysis of the emotions introduced in Chapter 2, and would have fit in much better there. The second chapter (Ch. 21 ‘The Concept of the Will’) suffers, by contrast, from an excess of dispensability. The ancient evolution of the theory of the will is a topic attracting a great deal of attention these days, and Sorabji’s views on it are extremely interesting. But they deserved exposure in a different sort of venue; Sorabji could have developed this material into a full monograph, and it is to be hoped that he will do so.

The fourth section finally introduces the Christians and their temptations. Here we are indebted to Sorabji for having brought to our attention a fascinating episode in early Church history. We learn how Evagrius, a rough contemporary of Augustine’s, transformed a minor theoretical epicycle in the Stoic theory (the positing of certain ‘pre-emotions’, the ‘agitations’ of this section’s title) into a list of wicked thoughts that Gregory the Great would then codify as the Seven Deadly Sins. Some parts of this story were probably familiar to Patristic scholars, but the connections to Stoicism seem not to have been made before. Sorabji also devotes a considerable portion of this section to a review of Augustine’s attitudes towards emotions, and towards lust in particular. In the closing words of the volume, Sorabji laments the fact that Augustine’s greater political clout led to the Church’s rejection of the Pelagian view of sex, according to which it is not intrinsically and irredeemably sinful. “If Pelagius had prevailed . . . a British theologian would have been at the centre of Western theology, and Western attitudes to sexuality, and to much else besides, might have been very different” (p. 417). No sex, please, we’re Augustinians.

With this section, too, one may have some concerns about the book’s organising principle, which are not allayed by the somewhat confusing decision to use the subtitle of the whole book (‘From Stoic Agitations to Christian Temptation’) as the title of this smallish final section. It is not clear how a seventy-five page exploration of Patristic misunderstandings acquired titular ascendancy over the earlier, three-hundred paged first-half devoted to the Stoic theory of emotions and their therapy.

This summary will have given the reader a flavour of the book, but it only scratches the surface of its diversity and riches. Scattered throughout the four

sections are a variety of excursions on topics that connect tangentially with Stoicism, or ancient philosophy, or emotions. Sorabji seldom declines an opportunity to pursue an intriguing sideline, and much of the book's charm comes from his willingness to put philosophers from different eras into conversation with one another. Typical of this is a stretch of dialectic in which he considers the Stoic insistence that all emotions should be eradicated, and then confronts it with the recent objection of Michael Stocker, writing without reference to the ancient Stoics, that a life completely purged of emotions is simply unimaginable for us. Not so, counters Sorabji, and calls to his aid such ancient examples as the life of extra-corporeal contemplation advocated by Plotinus (p. 189). I somehow wonder whether the ideal of Plotinian disembodied contemplation will have immediately laid Stocker's doubts to rest.

I have said enough, I hope, about why this book should be of interest to many readers; now I should focus on how I see it from the narrow corner of my own professional concerns, namely the study of ancient psychological theories, and Stoicism in particular. I have already begun to indicate, above, that I am not persuaded by Sorabji's reconstruction of a development in the Stoic theory of emotions. On the other hand, one of my reasons for dissatisfaction is also a reason to distrust any rival, non-developmental theory I may favour: the mere paucity of reliable evidence. I do not think we have anything like enough good data on which to base an account of Zeno's theory that would make it distinct from the better-attested theory of Chrysippus; but that very lack of data will also preclude my falsifying Sorabji's reconstruction.

But setting aside the question of its accuracy, I am independently concerned about the fact that Sorabji's diachronic reconstruction of a sequence of theories is never complemented by an account of how the psychological theories at each stage were integrated into an entire philosophical outlook. And yet this was the great lesson that the Stoics learned from the *Protagoras* and the *Republic*: that a theory of emotions is part and parcel of a general theory of psychology on the one hand, and axiology on the other hand, and that these in turn require systematic thought about the ontological status of the soul and the human being as well. As Jacques Brunschwig has shown, Plato even taught the Stoics that a theory of desire should be accompanied by an account of whether the objects of desire are material particulars, states of affairs, or propositions, and this must rebound again into the theory of epistemology.² When Socrates sets out Western civilisation's first psychological theory in the *Protagoras*, he does not merely give a cognitivist analysis of fear and desire. He also links it up with a denial of *akrasia*, and a general claim about the structure of all motivation, and an outline of a theory of practical rationality, and a doctrine of the commensurability of all values, and a theory of how errors in evaluative judgement arise. When Plato supersedes the cognitivist analysis of the emotions in the *Republic*, he does so as part of the most perfectly integrated account of psychology, epistemology, metaphysics,

2. 'On a Stoic Way of Not Being', pp. 158–169 of his collected *Papers in Hellenistic Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press 1994).

and ethics ever known to humankind—the account of the emotions is altered along with alterations in the theory of values, the theory of action, the theory of practical rationality, and so on.

Chrysippus gives us a comparably integrated system—that is why he is the only Stoic who deserves to be mentioned in the same breath as Plato and Aristotle. The soul is a physical entity, a portion of divine rational *pneuma*, which is characterised at any given time by the totality of its dispositions to assent to impressions, and which is actively engaged at any (waking) time in assenting to impressions, or suspending assent. The impressions are physical alterations of the pneumatic stuff, which alterations correlate with proposition-like items called *axiomata*. Because an adult human being is a rational soul, and is not the animal body it was as a child, its perfection and its good lie in a kind of perfection of knowledge and rational consistency, and the state of its body is a matter of indifference. The soul is only capable of entertaining one impression at a time, though it may have dispositions to assent to contradictory impressions. All intentional action results from assenting to certain kinds of evaluative impressions. And so on and so forth, throughout the whole system.

Sorabji's Stoics are all avidly debating the nature of the emotions, but they seem to do it in a philosophical vacuum. When Posidonius rejected Chrysippus's account of the emotions, did he also reject his psychology altogether? If he accepted a multi-partite soul, then did he reject the account of psychological development according to which the unified pneumatic principle which integrates and individuates the animal body of a pre-rational human child is transformed, *in toto*, into a unified pneumatic principle that integrates and individuates a rational adult? What about the axiology—did he reject the claim that food and life are mere indifferents, and that only virtue is good? What about the epistemology—did he think one can entertain multiple impressions in one's 'belief box'?

We hear extremely little about some of these questions, either from the ancient sources or from Sorabji, and about some of them we hear nothing at all. The ancient silence is more significant. For it suggests that Posidonius remained orthodox on all of the inter-related issues that surround the question of the emotions—had he dissented on the question of the indifference of food, for instance, the contradiction-mongers like Plutarch and Galen surely would have dined out on it. And this in turn gives us strong reason to prefer an account of Posidonius's views that leaves him in agreement with Chrysippus's theory of the emotions, rather than leaving him in disagreement with his own systematic philosophical commitments.

Here is one aspect, then, in which Sorabji's wide-ranging discussions seem to me to range too narrowly: he could have strengthened the cogency of his developmental hypothesis if he could have shown how the developments cohered at every stage with developments throughout the system. By focusing exclusively on the theory of emotions, at the expense of the rest of the Stoic theory, Sorabji makes it easier for an ancient Stoic to discuss emotions with a modern neurophysiologist, but harder for an ancient Stoic to discuss the emotions with an ancient Stoic ethicist, physicist, or logician.

Related to this point is a concern that in focusing on debates over what emotions are like, Sorabji is too quick to assume that the other terms of the discussion are familiar and well-known. Are emotions beliefs? Sorabji goes some way towards recognising that what the Stoics meant by ‘emotion’ (*pathos*) may have been fundamentally different from what we mean by ‘emotion’, but he seems less sensitive to the possibility that what the Stoics meant by ‘belief’ may be equally different from what we mean. For instance, Sorabji writes (p. 163) that “[w]e have recognized that you do not remove your fear in battle by deciding that it is inappropriate to run away”, referring to an earlier discussion of the sufficiency of belief for emotion, where he had counted this as a decisive blow against the cognitive theory in its unmodified, Chrysippean form. But it is worth pausing to consider what it would look like, on Chrysippus’s view, not to believe that it is appropriate to run away, and how damaging this case really is to the cognitive account.

For one thing, the reference to ‘deciding’ is quite irrelevant, and forms no part of the Stoic view. They were anything but voluntarists about beliefs; what I believe on the battlefield has little or nothing to do with what I ‘decide’ right then, and everything to do with how my dispositions to assent or suspend in response to impressions have been formed over the course of my life. So the fact that I cannot dispel my fear by ‘deciding’ right now to find flight inappropriate is neither here nor there. It is equally irrelevant that I cannot cheer myself up by the subvocalised mouthing of words; the fact that I chant to myself ‘I shouldn’t be afraid, I shouldn’t be afraid’ says nothing yet about whether I believe flight appropriate or not. Furthermore, the question of ‘appropriateness’ is a potential source of error, since it seems to suggest moral assessment, or at least some public standard of acceptable conduct. (In the American educational system one no longer hears children or their misbehaviours labelled ‘bad’; instead, they are ‘inappropriate’—which combines a questionable psychological view, that children should never be made to feel bad, with an unquestionably absurd semantic view, that such a feeling can only arise if they hear the phoneme ‘bad’). But, as I have argued elsewhere, the word that Sorabji habitually translates as ‘appropriate’ is completely neutral about the nature of the reasons in light of which a thing is to be done; it carries the merest gerundive force.³ To believe that it is appropriate to run away is to believe that, for whatever reason, running away is the thing for me to do. (As a separate point, we should keep in mind that the belief-state to be assessed for equivalence with lack of fear is the lack of belief that it is appropriate to flee; the belief that it is ‘inappropriate’ is not one that translates into the Stoic scheme.) To lack the belief that it is appropriate to run away is to see nothing in the situation in front of you that looks like something to be run from. It is to survey the scene, and see trees, humans, cars; perhaps a meal to be eaten or a bus to be caught, but nothing to run away from. If we now imagine Socrates at Delium, surveying the carnage fearlessly, is it absurd to say that he is fearless exactly inasmuch as he lacks the belief that there is

3. See my chapter on ‘Moral Psychology’ in Brad Inwood (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

anything in all of this to be run from? Conversely, if one had brought it about—not by ‘deciding’, or by subvocalising, but by decades of practice in shaping one’s dispositions to assent—if one had brought it about that one simply had no inclination to believe that there was anything on this battlefield that called for flight, would it be so absurd to say that one was not in a state of fear?

Sorabji’s alleged counter-example, on the other hand, is someone who has ‘decided’ that it is ‘inappropriate’ to run away—perhaps because they’ve just been scolded by their teacher—but nevertheless surveys the battlefield and finds it full of threats and dangers, full of things to be run from. Clearly this is a case that Chrysippus would count as fully vindicating his analysis; this is someone who believes that the thing to do is to get away from the battlefield pronto, and their fear is exactly that belief. If there is disagreement about what the subject’s real belief is, then shall we judge by their subvocalised mouthings, or by how they vote with their feet? I say the Stoics would opt for the second—and now we should examine the inevitable charge of circularity. I would certainly be guilty of a circle if I first tried to argue that beliefs of a certain kind are sufficient for action, and then argued that we should impute the beliefs on the basis of the resultant action—if you aren’t persuaded of the sufficiency claim, you won’t accept the imputation-rule, either. But I am not trying to persuade anyone of either claim; instead, I am trying to argue that the Stoics accepted both claims, and that it is impossible to understand the Stoics if you give them one and deny them the other. Thus I am not engaged in any sort of circularity myself, and there is as yet no reason to accuse the Stoics of circularity, either.

My point is that we must not suppose that our assumptions about ‘belief’ can remain unchanged when we examine a system in which emotions are said to be beliefs. In particular, it seems to me that much of Sorabji’s conception of the therapeutic import of the cognitive analysis suffers from this sort of assumption. He seems to think that emotions would be pretty stubborn and refractory things if they were not cognitive, but they will suddenly become more tractable if it turns out that they are beliefs. It is as though he thinks that cognitivists must endorse the following syllogism:

Beliefs are easy to change
All emotions are beliefs
So, emotions are easy to change.

Or, when he is conceding the limitations of the cognitive analysis, he argues as follows:

Beliefs are easy to change
Some emotions are not easy to change
So, some emotions are not beliefs.

What never seems to occur to him is that the Stoics might have taken the *modus tollens* view of this situation:

All emotions are beliefs
Some emotions are not easy to change
So, some beliefs are not easy to change.

If it has been our universal experience that some emotions are very hard to resist, alter, or overcome, and then we suddenly learn that they have all along been beliefs, surely we should conclude that the alteration of belief is a very different affair than we had innocently assumed. Indeed, learning that they are beliefs may open up no new opportunities for therapy whatsoever—exactly because the beliefs that are emotions will turn out not to be amenable to the easy methods of belief-change that allow me to revise my false beliefs about the capital of Saskatchewan, and will require the same old methods that I have always thought of as methods of emotional shaping—the habitual inculcation of the right likes and dislikes, the right loves and hates, and so on. The alteration of our patterns of belief and dispositions to assent may turn out to be just as slow and arduous as we had found it to be when we thought of these beliefs only in their guise as emotions.

Now there is a question that arises at some stage here about whether one can call just any psychological theory a cognitive theory. As I have elsewhere said:

One might suppose that part of the point of making emotions beliefs, and locating them in a unified reasoning soul, is to take a stance on their responsiveness to reasoned argumentation and change of view. . . . [But] some of the methods envisioned by Epictetan *askēsis* should prompt us to ask the general question: can cognitive theorists help themselves to just any possible means of behavior-modification, while still claiming that what they are attempting to do is to reshape beliefs? What if they claim that our actions are the result of a belief that we do not avow and are unaware of having, and further claim that we cannot rid ourselves of this putative belief, even in principle, except by the use of electric shocks? What sort of a belief is this, when it can only be altered this way?⁴

But these are philosophical worries, not interpretive ones; the view of belief may be messy, but I have no doubt it is Stoic. By contrast, Sorabji wants to operate with a more familiar account of belief—as the sort of thing you can change by having a helpful chat about matters—but he is then unable to account for the Stoic willingness to equate beliefs of this tidy and transparent sort with emotions. Here too, it seems to me that his focus on emotions to the exclusion of broader questions of Stoic epistemology led to limitations.

Even within the narrow analysis of emotions, there is one point that Sorabji takes rather too readily for granted. It is a small question in the overall theory, and at times I myself have made something like the assumption Sorabji does; but because Sorabji makes this part of his analysis so central to his therapeutic

4. Brennan, 'Moral Psychology' in Brad Inwood (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

project, a great deal more turns on whether he got it right or not. This is the matter of whether emotions consist in one belief or two. In his opening exposition of the theory, Sorabji writes: “[e]very emotion involves two distinctive [typo for distinct?] value judgements. One is that there is good or bad (benefit or harm) at hand, the other that it is appropriate to react” (p. 29). This two-belief analysis is mentioned again when Sorabji wants to champion ancient cognitivism over modern versions: “Modern philosophy has also debated whether emotions are judgements, but seldom with as much rigour. This is because Chrysippus was so exact about what judgements he had in mind . . .” (p. 5). And it is the most important element in the therapeutic method: “the analysis immediately tells you which two propositions you typically need to attack if you want to get rid of an emotion . . .” (p. 160). It is also the basis of Sorabji’s hope that Stoic therapy can be detached from (what he takes to be) the unacceptable presuppositions of Stoic axiology, according to which we are always mistaken in believing that, for instance, the death of a loved one is a bad thing: “it is important that therapy can attack the second judgement, that it is appropriate to react . . . since therapy does not have to fasten on the peculiarly Stoic doctrine of indifference, Stoic therapies are available to members of other schools”, and other centuries as well.

It is thus worth noting that there is relatively little evidence that emotions consist in two beliefs, and a great deal of evidence that they consist in one belief. Indeed, every definition of the emotions that has been transmitted to us says so: they all say that pleasure, for instance, is the belief (or a belief) that some present thing is a good of a certain sort. No definitions ever say that pleasure consists in two beliefs, or pleasure is a pair of beliefs, or the conjunction of two beliefs, or anything like that.

On the other hand, the single belief in which all the emotions are said to consist is always a complex belief, a belief with a reference to a second belief embedded in it. Desire, for instance, is the belief that some future thing is a good—of such a sort that the thing to do is to pursue it. Or, desire is a belief in a future good—which good they think it right to pursue.

This may make the distinction between one belief and two seem trivial and unimportant—it does not obviously matter whether we parse it as two beliefs, ‘I think it is good and I think I should pursue it’, or as one complex belief, ‘I think it is a good of such a sort that I think I should pursue it’. The difference between parataxis and hypotaxis is still just syntactical, nothing more.

But there is a related issue that is not merely syntactical: the issue of the separability of the two beliefs. Is it possible to think of something as a future good and not think of it as worthy of pursuit? Or is it simply built into what it means to think of it as good, that I think of it as *ipso facto* worthy of pursuit? Is the thought about pursuit a necessary consequence of conceiving of it as a good?

This issue is important not only for the Stoic theory of psychology, but also for the Stoic theory of teleology. Why do human beings have emotions to begin with? In light of the fact that they are always bad, false, and vicious, why should a providential god have designed us in such a way that we all have them, and can spend a lifetime attempting to get rid of them?

If the second part of the emotion, the one that specifies the pursuit or avoidance, is a necessary concomitant of the first thought, then the Stoics have an excellent defence of Zeus's providence. Recall that Sages do not have emotions, but they do have *eupatheiai*, which are virtuous impulses infallibly oriented towards the only things that are in fact good and bad, namely virtue and vice. So, for instance, Sages recognise their own current possession of virtue and have a perfectly appropriate reaction to this good thing—not 'pleasure' (since that's a vice) but 'joy'. When Sages contemplate their future virtue, they see it, accurately, as a good, and are motivated to pursue it not with 'desire' (since that's a vice) but with 'volition'. So too for their 'caution' (not 'fear') in avoiding future vice.

In light of the psychology of Sages—which is the normative psychology for all human beings—we can say that there is really nothing wrong with pursuing what you believe to be a good, or avoiding what you believe to be a bad. That is exactly what all human beings are designed to do. When vicious people have emotions, the only thing that has gone wrong is a cognitive failure—a mistaken belief that they are dealing with a genuine good or bad, when in fact they are only dealing with an indifferent. But the impulse that is consequent on that mistaken evaluation is functioning exactly as it should; if you think there is a bad thing impending, then you should indeed flee from it. Modulo the evaluative error, your emotion is no stain on god's providence, because you are reacting in a way that would be perfectly appropriate if the situation facing you were as you mistakenly believe it to be. There is no flaw in god's design, merely a consequence of our cognitive limitations, and one that we can overcome by the epistemological discipline of becoming Sages.

But this teleological analysis of the origin of the emotions as misguided *eupatheiai* hits one bump: the case of pain or distress. There is no *eupathic* correlate of pain, because Sages can never truly believe that there is something bad present to them (since only vice is bad, and qua Sages they have no vice). But in the case of pain, it is important to remember that we all begin our lives as vicious people, even those of us who will become Sages. And in a teleologically ideal world, there is no reason that we should become downhearted or depressed about that. So the same teleological story tells us that we should be able to recognise the presence of a bad thing, without having the second belief that we ought to be downcast about it—that is the state of ideal human beings on their way to becoming Sages.

So pain is not a misplaced *eupatheia*; it is not a cognitive mistake (since in fact we are right to think that something bad is present to us, as long as we are vicious), and the real error in pain is the belief that we ought to become upset about our temporary state of vice. In pain, there is a systematic reason why the connection between the first, evaluative belief and the second, impulsive belief should not be necessary, as it is with the other three emotions.

Now we should notice a very significant thing. The only evidence for the two-belief view comes from one very limited context: the therapeutic treatment of grief or pain. Sorabji relies for his two-belief analysis entirely, as far as I can see, on passages that relate how Chrysippus claimed that the belief about it being appropriate to be downcast can be separated from the belief

that something bad is present. This also seems to have been the only case considered in the so-called 'Therapeutic' book of Chrysippus' four-book treatise on the Emotions. As far as the evidence extends, the idea that the two beliefs are separable, and the idea that one can address the belief about appropriateness without altering the beliefs about goods and bads, comes entirely from the case of pain, and has no parallels with any other emotion. This means that the therapy that Sorabji envisages—where we continue believing what we always believed about goods and bads, but change our beliefs about what is appropriate—simply will not work for pleasure, fear, or desire. Indeed, as far as the evidence indicates, the Stoics do not seem to have thought there was any therapy of desire, apart from the acquisition of the true account of what is really good and what is indifferent.

Does this mean that Sorabji's hopes for a modernised Stoic therapy, shorn of its austere axiology, must be abandoned? No, not for this reason at any rate. At most it can only show that the Stoics themselves would have thought the attempt was futile—that it is impossible to conceive of winning the lottery as good without seeing it as to-be-pursued, and impossible to conceive of death as bad without seeing it as to-be-avoided—not that the Stoics were right to think so, or that Sorabji is wrong to think otherwise. I myself find the prospect of any therapeutic method based on Stoicism to be extremely implausible, but I say that neither as a student of the Stoics nor as a philosopher, merely as a long-time consumer of various therapeutic modalities, with developed prejudices about what is likely to work.

I suspect that Sorabji will not be much daunted by my doubts over whether there are two beliefs or only one, and whether the two beliefs (or sub-beliefs) are separable in all cases or only in the special case of pain. It would little impair the many ambitious projects he pursues in this book. I should close by noting again what an extraordinary thing it is, how rich, provocative, varied, and entertaining. It is a worthy successor to his many previous accomplishments.