

# FATE AND FREE WILL IN STOICISM

A Discussion of Susanne Bobzien,  
*Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy*<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. Introduction

PROGRESS in the study of ancient philosophy, as in most scholarly disciplines, is an incremental matter of slow advances. It is a reviewer's job to record any forward motion, warn readers away from dead ends and diversions, and celebrate the occasional leaps ahead, when a rare contribution puts us ten years further down the road. Susanne Bobzien's new book, by contrast, sets us back—about two thousand years. Not since the days when Crinis cribbed Chrysippus have we had this clear an account of the Stoic system or this detailed a presentation of the interconnections between their views on logic, modality, causality, determinism, and moral responsibility—and those earlier compendia are now rather difficult to purchase. This brilliant work is one of the most extraordinary achievements that the last century's renaissance of studies in ancient philosophy produced, and as an exercise in pure intellectual reconstruction—the patient reassemblage, from a mass of tiny fragments, of a philosophical system's original synthetic glory—I do not know of any

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I am grateful in the first instance to Susanne Bobzien for discussions of Stoicism that began in the early 1990s and continued through the preparation of this review. I also benefited from discussions over the years with Brad Inwood, Bob Sharples, and Richard Sorabji; Charles Brittain and Stephen Menn also gave me valuable comments on this discussion. And as always, my deepest thanks go to Liz Karns.

<sup>1</sup> Susanne Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy* (Oxford, 1998), pp. xi + 441. I should note that this book is extremely well produced, and seems to contain a far lower rate of typographical errors than has become the norm (Greek terms in the subject index have lost their accents and breathings; εἰς has been transformed into εἰ in the modal definitions on 112, 122; on 314 a stop has crept into 'what the Stoics thought "x is fated" means').

book written in the last century that clearly outshines it, and only a handful that stand in its league.

Indeed, its brilliance, the range and splendour of its accomplishments, and the frequency with which it produces definitive resolutions of long-vexed questions, are such as to disarm the most determined fault-finder, and reduce the most cantankerous critic to cooing concurrence. But a mere expression of admiration for this work, or of agreement with its conclusions, would not do justice to its significance. For its greatest value lies in the extent to which it will transform debate in the field, by providing a new foundation of agreement on which to base the inevitable disagreements. That is to say, we can now carry on with the really interesting task of assessing the philosophical value and import of what Chrysippus or Epictetus said, with a greater assurance that it is really *their* theories, rather than distortions of their theories, that we are examining. This is not to deny that specialists will continue to disagree at lower levels of detail, disputing a particular textual emendation, the detailed nomenclature of Stoic causal categorization, and other matters of this sort.<sup>2</sup> But I believe that the broad outlines of Bobzien's picture will win acceptance, and that their general acceptance will put a number of bad disputes behind us, and make room for better and more interesting disputes.

The best way for a short notice to do justice to this book, then, is for it to offer samples of the kind of higher-level assessment of Stoicism that we can now aspire to producing—samples offered, of course, not as indisputable, but as contributions to the new disputes. Most of the following comments and criticisms will be predicated on the assumption that Bobzien has described Chrysippus' system correctly, and proceed from there to ask about the merits of his system so described. Accordingly, I shall begin by sketching out what I take to be the main argumentative axis of the book, namely the detailed presentation of Chrysippean compatibilism. I shall then address a series of problems that arise for Chrysippus given this reconstruction—problems about necessitation, assent, and psychology. I shall finish with some modest observations about methodology.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, controversy will probably continue over her claim that Fate should be identified with the totality of all causes, rather than with the subclass of antecedent causes (301–13). I found her discussion here persuasive, but some advocates of the opposing view will doubtless differ.

Before I turn to my discussion, I should briefly sketch the contents of the book. After an introduction that provides an invaluable survey of the sources, the first chapter focuses on metaphysical prolegomena to the study of determinism and fate. The discussion of events and their relation to propositions is a significant advance in scholarship, even apart from its central role in the later chapters. The second chapter considers two positive arguments for Stoic determinism, the argument from bivalence and the argument from divination. The third chapter reverts, in a sense, to preliminaries, by laying out an authoritative account of Stoic modal logic whose details will be crucial to the defence of the compatibilism. Chapters 4 and 5 consider two anti-Stoic objections and the Stoic responses; the first one is the famous case of Fabius and the dog-star, and the second is the notorious Idle Argument. The treatment of each objection is of the highest quality, with respect to the handling of sources, the discrimination of possible interpretations, and the defence of Chrysippean consistency.<sup>3</sup> The sixth chapter is the pay-off for all preliminaries and prolegomena, a full-dress defence of Chrysippus' compatibilism, through an examination of the arguments about the cylinder and the cone in Cicero and Gellius. In a book packed with excellent matter, this chapter is the best of all; it will also be the focus of my comments below.

The last two chapters of this book shift from an exclusive focus on Chrysippus in order to deal with Epictetus (Chapter 7) and a later

<sup>3</sup> I am more impressed than Bobzien is by the Idle Argument's ability to cast doubt on the point of action and deliberation, in part because I think its proponents had deeper and more interesting indeterministic concerns than the ones she will grant them, and in part because I am impressed by the similarities between the Idle Argument and Newcomb's Problem, which jeopardize her defence by recourse to probabilities. 'For a non-futile action it is sufficient that there is a chance that the action matters for the outcome in that there is a probability that it is a necessary condition for triggering or preventing a prospective cause from being active and thus furthers a certain envisaged result. And I can see no reason why this should not have been all Chrysippus was after' (225–6). If 'a chance' and 'a probability' simply mean 'some positive, non-zero chance/probability', then the difficulty emerges that for any action, both doing that action and not doing it will be equally non-futile. It may be that going to the telephone now is the necessary condition that triggers and thus furthers my calling the doctor; or it may be that not going to the telephone now is the necessary condition that triggers and thus furthers it; there is some probability in each direction (epistemic, as Bobzien notes). But if inaction is never any *more* futile than action, then why not be lazy? If the suggestion is that there is *more* probability in one direction than the other, then it seems to me that the considerations from Newcomb's problem emerge; relative probabilities are misapplied if the agent's choice cannot alter the outcome.

Stoic theory of compatibilism (Chapter 8), whose author Bobzien refers to, with characteristic caution, as PHILOPATOR, in order to mark the fact that its attribution to the historical Philopator cannot be secured beyond doubt.<sup>4</sup> These chapters also deserve high praise; I now sketch them with slightly greater fullness because I shall not return to them below.

The chapter on Epictetus makes extremely important contributions to Epictetan studies, by clarifying his usage of the central terms *ἐλευθερία*, *ἀντεξουσία*, and *τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῶν*. Of equal importance for our clear view of the whole of Stoicism, Bobzien shows in detail why we should treat as utterly anomalous two fragments that have sometimes been taken to give us the essential orthodoxy of Stoic determinism, namely Cleanthes' trimeter hymn to Zeus and Destiny, and the image of the dog and cart preserved in Hippolytus.<sup>5</sup> After we have become familiar with the compatibilist theory of Chrysippus in the first six chapters of the book, it must jump out at us as undeniable that these two fragments have very little to do with that theory, and accordingly very little to do with the main lines of Stoicism. They seem to reflect Cleanthes' views on fate, and Epictetus' practical and homiletic application of those views, but they do not give us the master key to understanding Stoic determinism. This is a result of the first importance.

The chapter on PHILOPATOR ends with a discussion of the later fortunes of the Stoic theory, its interactions with Middle Platonism and Peripatetic theories, and its evolution into something like the modern problems of free will (8.7). The style of treatment here is engagingly wide-ranging and synthetic, and the hylodendritic ratio for once preponderates towards the forest rather than the trees. I mean by this no criticism of Bobzien's normal approach; it is exactly the care and precision of the earlier chapters that enables this more synoptic discussion to remain well grounded and responsible. But I certainly do mean to express my hope that in future publications we shall hear more from Bobzien sweeping the horizon with binoculars, as well as Bobzien peering intently through the microscope.

But to put the treatise as a whole into binocular perspective, I

<sup>4</sup> Though she has secured it at least beyond my own doubts (370).

<sup>5</sup> R. J. Hankinson expresses the same verdict on these two fragments in 'Determinism and Indeterminism', in K. Algra, J. Barnes, J. Mansfeld, and M. Schofield (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1999), 513–41 at 540–1.

should note that the main finding of these chapters is that Epictetus and PHILOPATOR are both orthodox, Chrysippean compatibilists. There are differences of terminology in Epictetus, and elaborations of the orthodox view in PHILOPATOR, but the theory remains the same one detailed in the first six chapters.<sup>6</sup> This fact motivates my exclusive attention to those earlier chapters in the comments that follow.

## 2. Compatibilism in brief

The central argument of this book is that Chrysippus developed a sophisticated, consistent, and systematic version of compatibilism about determinism and moral responsibility. On the one hand, he embraced a determinism that is strictly universal in its scope, without any exceptions for human actions. Fate determines the public actions of walking and stretching out one's hand, as well as their hidden psychic springs: our assents are just as fully determined as the phases of the moon. On the other hand, he insisted that the conditions under which agents are responsible for their actions are fulfilled in the majority of cases in which we typically hold them responsible, i.e. in those cases in which no external force compels them to act as they do. Accordingly, he had to elaborate a doctrine of determinism, and a doctrine of moral responsibility, and construct each of them so as to remain consistent with the other. In this task, Bobzien argues, he succeeded.

Bobzien distinguishes the determinism that Chrysippus endorsed from a variety of views that have sometimes been attributed to him. He did not espouse a fairy-tale fatalism, in which only the dramatically salient events in the agent's life are fixed beforehand while the minor events are left unscripted. He did not limit fate to the world outside our minds, while allowing our inner selves to enjoy transcendental freedom; there is no causal firewall separating psyches from the rest of the world. Fate's universal dominion is expressed in what Bobzien calls the Fate Principle (56–8): everything happens in accordance with Fate. On the other hand, he did insist that many events that occur, our uncompelled actions among

<sup>6</sup> This finding confirms for determinism the general verdict that B. Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism* (Oxford, 1985), expressed on the relation between Epictetus and Chrysippus in ethics and psychology: differences in expression merely mask fundamental agreement in doctrine.

them, are not necessitated to occur; and he crafted his logic of necessity and possibility with at least one eye directed to this result. (Bobzien's earlier monograph on Stoic modal logic is still the indispensable exploration of Chrysippus' modal logic, and anyone who wants to engage critically with her discussions of modality here will need to make a thorough study of it.<sup>7</sup>) The resulting contingency is not merely epistemic; the possibilities that are preserved are not merely necessities unknown. But neither do they involve any relaxation of the stringency or sweep of the causal network; some of the things that happen do not happen by necessity, but everything that happens still happens by Fate.

On the side of moral responsibility, Bobzien wages an unrelenting campaign against what she takes to be the anachronistic retrojection of later concerns about free will. In a section that is in some sense the philosophical core of the book (6.3.5), she contrasts two conceptions of moral responsibility:

The first (MR1) considers it a necessary condition for praising or blaming an agent for an action, that it was the agent *and not something else* that was causally responsible for whether the action occurred. The contrast is between self-determination and other-determination to act. . . . The second . . . (MR2) considers it a prerequisite for blaming or praising an agent for an action that the agent could have done otherwise. (278; emphasis original)

It is MR2 that tends to drive the thought that moral responsibility requires indeterminism; but the controversies between Chrysippus and his opponents, Bobzien argues, all turn on MR1, whose watchword is autonomy, i.e. the lack of external constraint. Modern critics who presuppose that MR2 reflects the one eternal and correct notion of moral responsibility are led either to misinterpret Chrysippus through their need to make his system indeterministic, or to find fault with his determinism on the grounds that it is incompatible with their conception of responsibility. By rejecting MR2 as anachronistic, Bobzien can propose that Chrysippus was able to satisfy the historically relevant requirement on responsibility, sc. MR1, and that this was also the requirement that his opponents had

<sup>7</sup> *Die stoische Modallogik* (Würzburg, 1986), which is also a gem of a book, though on a much smaller scale. In particular, its discussion of Chrysippus' claim that the impossible can follow from the possible, and the doctrine of perishing propositions that underlies it, is an essential supplement to the account of modality in the third chapter of the current book.

in mind in their objections. Since his theory of determinism allows us to say that for a select class of events it was 'the agent, and not something else' that was the cause of the event, it thereby permits as rich a sense of responsibility as anyone of the time demanded. This, in the broadest terms, is the structure of Chrysippean compatibilism.

I want to consider four aspects of Chrysippus' theory, as it is presented in Bobzien's defence. First, there is the employment of the modal definitions in the rejection of the charge that fate necessitates our actions. Then there is the existence of a sort of double nomenclature involving 'necessity', which allows him to meet charges of contradiction with a 'distinguo'. Finally, there is the role of assent in compatibilism—first I look at a brief remark Bobzien makes that I think courts misunderstanding, and then I examine in more detail the account of how our disposition to assent grounds the account of moral responsibility codified in MR1 above.

### 3. Modality and psychology

It seems to have been common ground between all parties to the debate that moral responsibility requires contingency. For instance, if it is necessary that I go for a walk, then the fact that I go for a walk will not depend on me, and I cannot be held responsible for going for a walk. Inasmuch as the Stoics are committed to the legitimacy of praise and blame, and the existence of things that depend on us, they are also committed to the existence of contingent events; not everything that happens happens by necessity.

A number of anti-Stoic arguments direct their fire on this point, by claiming that the Stoic theory of determinism makes all events necessary, leaving no room for contingency and thus no room for moral responsibility. Chrysippus resolutely denied this; fate causes and fate determines, but fate does not necessitate.<sup>8</sup>

One of Bobzien's breakthroughs here is her assessment of these arguments in the light of her detailed exposition of Chrysippean modal logic in Chapter 3. After all, if Plutarch, Alexander, and the

<sup>8</sup> Or at any rate, event *E* is not necessitated merely in virtue of the fact that *E* is fated. If any events are necessitated (e.g. the next conflagration?), then they are also fated, since all events are. But there are at least some events (e.g. those for which we are responsible) that are fated without being necessitated.

rest want to convict the Stoics of inconsistency, they must show that fate makes everything necessary on the Stoics' own definition of what is necessary, not some other definition. Bobzien argues that when we consider the anti-Stoic objections in the light of the Stoic definitions, we see that the objections fail: fate does not render everything necessary in their terms.

Her defence relies on her reconstruction of the Stoic modal definition of necessity, painstakingly detailed in Chapter 3: 'A proposition is necessary if and only if it is not internally capable of being false, or is capable of being false, but is hindered by external circumstances from being false.'<sup>9</sup> The two disjuncts in the definition contrast an internal capability, which Bobzien sometimes suggests has to do with 'conceptual' or 'essential'<sup>10</sup> features of the object, with an external capacity, which Bobzien illustrates by suggesting that Dio would be externally hindered from walking by 'Dio's being tied to a chair, having his legs paralysed, [or] being severely ill' (113). By showing that the alleged problem cases do not satisfy this definition, Bobzien argues that Stoic determinism does not render everything necessary.

Plutarch, for instance argued that fate precludes unactualized possibility, asking 'how is it possible for the one in Megara to go to Athens, when he is prevented by fate?' Bobzien replies: 'Plutarch simply ignores or suppresses the fact that the preventing circumstances from the modal definition have to be external. If I "prevent" myself from going to Athens by deciding to stay at home instead, nothing external prevents me from going to Athens (assuming I have the means to go, etc.)' (129). Since the proposition 'I go to Athens' is perfectly receptive of truth, i.e. has no intrinsic incoherence, it passes the first conjunct of the possibility definition; and since it is not hindered from being true by any external facts, it passes the second conjunct. Thus, it is still possible that I should go to Athens, even when I will not go because I decide not to go, and even when my decision was fated and caused from all eternity. Nothing about the fact that it was fated entails that it is necessary, given the Stoic definition of necessity.

<sup>9</sup> I here print a compromise between her reconstructions on 112 and 115; from the later version I take the 'if and only if' and the qualifier 'internally', but I leave out the subtleties of tense.

<sup>10</sup> 119 n. 51, referring to the discussion of Philonian modalities on 109, esp. n. 29.

Likewise in responding to an argument in Cicero, Bobzien argues as follows:

Here, a question arises concerning the justification of non-necessity: is it not evidently absurd to call something (i.e. assents) not necessary if the antecedent causes do not determine it, but *something else* does? . . . this sort of objection can be invalidated if one remembers that Chrysippus had presented his own analysis of the modalities and that it is natural to assume that he is relying on this analysis when he talks about necessity in his reply. . . . [In] Chrysippus' modal accounts, the definiens of necessity is a disjunction, consisting of two parts . . . : either the proposition is not capable of being false, or the proposition is capable of being false but external hindrances prevent it from being false. Only the second part applies to the present issue. . . . If an act of assent were necessary, this would mean that the proposition 'I assent to this impression' could in principle be false, but is prevented from being false by external circumstances. It could in principle be false, since I could withhold assent in the sense that having a faculty of assent means being in principle able to give or withhold assent. . . . [But it] would not be prevented from being false, because although the impression entered my mind, there would be no external force or hindrance that prevents the act of assent from not happening. . . . If there is something that 'hinders' the withholding of assent it is me or the nature of my mind—but Chrysippus would probably and rightly object to this use of words, since this 'hindrance' would be neither external nor connected with force. (311–12)

This is a brilliant piece of interpretative reconstruction. The doctrine of assent to impressions is combined with the definition of necessity in order to show that even when my assent is fated, and caused, it is still not necessary. This argument is the real linchpin of the Chrysippean view; had assents turned out to be necessitated, then all human action would have been necessitated, exactly in that aspect where we might most have hoped to find room for responsibility. By introducing the modal material, Bobzien shows how Chrysippus meant to avoid this result. And even when the question of assent is not in play (as with the quotation from Plutarch above), Bobzien shows how the Stoic definition of necessity and possibility was employed to counter the charge that fate entails necessity; she defends the compatibilism by recourse to arguments of this general sort at a series of crucial junctures in the book.<sup>11</sup>

I am convinced that Bobzien's interpretation is correct here; I

<sup>11</sup> In addition to the two passages just cited (129 and 311–12), references to this defence may be found at 142 and 290.

agree with her that Chrysippus intended his modal theory to buttress his determinism in this way. However, I am also convinced—and here I disagree with Bobzien—that this defence suffers from grave defects.

It seems to me that there is a deep mismatch between the modal definitions and the work they must do in preserving the responsibility of agents—or to put that differently, I think there is only a shallow correspondence between the words 'internal' and 'external' as they appear in each context. It is true that the modal definitions allude to some sort of distinction between internal considerations and external considerations (113). But why should we suppose that this distinction will correspond in any direct or tidy way to a divide between what is internal and external to the agent, or their psyche? How does the match-up proceed, and in particular, where should we place my character, or my dispositions to assent—i.e. that whole detailed and complicated psychology that distinguishes me from any other person? In the terms of the modal definitions, is that an internal or an external factor?

Now when she is considering whether my withholding of assent is hindered by any external factors, Bobzien seems to assume that my personal psychology is internal, not external; that is why 'me or the nature of my mind' does not constitute an external hindrance. But if it really is internal, then it looks as though the proposition should be necessary in virtue of the first disjunct. There is something internal to me—not just my neutral 'faculty of assent', but that faculty plus my thoroughly habituated and vice-ridden dispositions and inclinations to assent. It was those, in combination with the incoming impression, that caused my assent—even Chrysippus agrees to this much. But then he must also agree that, as an internal factor, my total disposition rendered me incapable of *not* assenting when an impression of just that kind came in. Or, to put it in propositional terms, the proposition 'this hardened miser assents to the impression that money is good' is not capable of, or receptive of, being false. So, by the modal definition, my assent was necessary.

But perhaps we are wrong to say that the detailed disposition is internal. For when Bobzien assesses the first disjunct, she does not include that disposition, but only refers to the neutral 'faculty of assent', which can go both ways and so does not necessitate.<sup>12</sup> Now, clearly my detailed disposition is something very different

<sup>12</sup> 'It could in principle be false, since I could withhold assent in the sense that

from a neutral 'faculty of assent' that can go both ways; quite the opposite, given my disposition, and given an incoming impression, my disposition will only go one way. Let us follow Bobzien then, and say that only the 'faculty of assent' which is 'in principle able to give or withhold assent' is internal; we thereby deny that the detailed disposition is internal. But in that case, it looks as though it must be external, and thus just as much of an opposing factor as the ropes tying poor Dio to the chair (and notice that the modal definitions do not refer to whether the external factor 'forces', only whether it 'opposes', *ἐναντιοῦται*). In which case, my assent is once again necessary.

Or, thirdly, perhaps neither of these options is right. When we look inside, we see only the neutral faculty, not the detailed psychology; that is why the first disjunct does not apply. When we look outside, we see no ropes or bolted doors, so the second disjunct does not apply. Thus, since my own psychology—'me or the nature of my mind' (312)—is neither internal nor external, my assent is not necessitated by either disjunct, even though given that impression and that psychology I was *caused* to assent and there was no chance that I would *not* assent.

But this third option seems very unsatisfactory as well. To begin with, one would have thought that the division embodied in the two disjuncts of the modal definition would be an exclusive and exhaustive one: whatever is not internal is external. But furthermore, if we allow things like my detailed psychology to leak out of the definition in this way, there will be a great deal more leakage as well. Suppose that I am not blindfolded, and that there is plenty of light in the room. And suppose, as is the case, that I am the sort of creature that can see—I have a 'faculty of vision', given the kind of essence I have. Then it follows that it is possible for me to see—even if some years ago my eyes were put out with a sharp stick.<sup>13</sup> The question of the detailed current condition of my eyes,

having a faculty of assent means being in principle able to give or withhold assent' (312).

<sup>13</sup> One could respond here that it is not possible for me to see, because I am prevented from seeing by an external factor, namely the stick that blinded me. But this option would carry severe costs in the moral sphere. It is true that my being blind now was caused by a stick twenty years ago; but my vicious disposition has causal roots in the external world, as well. On this model, we could say that I necessarily do not assent to a virtuous impulse, because my assent is hindered by an external factor, sc. the bad upbringing that corrupted my dispositions.

like that of my detailed psychology, will apparently dance away from the hard choice of being internal or external. Absurdities like this will proliferate if we establish the boundaries of the internal and external in this way, and allow a third realm of displaced persons (and personalities). Note that these problems will arise, *inter alia*, whenever there is a difference between my species nature and my individual nature. If only my species nature—my 'faculty of assent or vision'—is internal, and my individual nature is neither internal nor external, then we have opened up a vast room for causing without necessitating—but at a vast cost in overall coherence, I think.

And indeed, once we see this particular parade of horrors, we ought to reconsider the entire suggestion that we can apply the modal definition directly to the psychology. The word 'external' as it appears in the modal definitions surely does not *in general* mean 'external to a human agent's psychology', since the modal definitions must apply to a vast number of propositions which have nothing to do with any psychology, human or otherwise. It may be more plausible to suppose that the general point has to do with things' natures, and that human psychology is just one instance of this. One of Bobzien's great achievements has been to show how Chrysippus' views on modality reflect, for instance, the puzzle about the straw on the bottom of the sea.<sup>14</sup> We might say that the straw will necessarily remain unburnt, because although its nature is such as to admit of being burnt, there are external factors (the sea water) that will always prevent it from burning. Here 'external' means something like 'external to the nature of the straw', and that might illustrate a more general sense of 'external' and 'internal', which in the case of human actions would reduce in the right way to the question of psychology.

But the details are extremely elusive. Should we look only at the internal nature of the subject term, like the straw, or at the natures of all of the items mentioned in the proposition? (Consider the possibility of 'I see the number 2', even assuming my eyes are in good health—is the number's invisibility an internal or an external factor? What if the proposition were 'The number 2 is seen by me'?) Or should we apply the spatial references to the proposition as a

<sup>14</sup> 'Chrysippus' Modal Logic and its Relation to Philo and Diodorus', in K. Döring and T. Ebert (eds.) *Dialektiker und Stoiker* (Stuttgart, 1993), which forms the basis for the account in ch. 3 of the present book.

whole, asking what is internal or external to it? This is perhaps the most natural reading of the definitions, but extremely difficult to make sense of in detail.

There is little evidence of how Chrysippus wanted to work out these details, but of course this does not constitute evidence that he did not have them worked out, or that with sufficient ingenuity we cannot work them out ourselves. But we have not yet succeeded in rebutting the charge of necessitation, so long as it is not yet clear how to apply the modal definitions to the psychology. Until that is worked out, we cannot clear Chrysippus of the suspicion that he is engaged in a conjuring trick whereby the coin is passed from one hand to the other while both are declared empty.

#### 4. Naming necessity

Then there were other ancient objections (3.4) that alleged a straightforward contradiction between the claim that everything happens by fate and the claim that some things are not necessitated, on the grounds that the Stoics habitually describe fate as 'inexorable' or 'untransgressable', 'unpreventable', 'immutable', 'unchangeable', and so on. All of these descriptions, as Bobzien writes, 'emphasize the point that whenever something is fated to happen, it cannot not happen', i.e. it is necessary (140). Indeed, the Stoics sometimes simply call fate 'Necessity'—how, then, can they insist that everything happens by fate, and yet deny that everything happens by necessity?

Bobzien comes to Chrysippus' aid by proposing that he employed a double system of nomenclature, one set of terms referring to the 'cosmological' notion of Necessity, and one to the 'logical' notion of necessity used in his theory of compatibilist determinism (136). There is *Anankē*, the goddess, and *to anankaion*, the modal term, and these belong to 'separate parts of his philosophy'. Fate may be called *Ἀνάγκη*, but it is never said to entail *τὸ ἀναγκαῖον*. Bobzien supports this proposal with a great deal of textual evidence, and the degree of consistency in Chrysippus' usage is indeed striking.

What I find unsatisfactory about this solution is that it leaves it incomprehensible why Chrysippus was willing to court misunderstanding in this way—why, if he had no interest in saying that fate necessitates events, did he carry on the terminological tradi-

tions that identified Fate with Necessity? Bobzien suggests that the Stoics wanted 'to make clear that their Fate was not an anthropomorphic power with whom one could bargain' (140); this goes some way, but not very far.

And this is just one instance of a more general puzzle about the role of determinism in Stoicism. When one focuses on the ancient polemics, it seems that Chrysippus had no positive use for determinism, had no good word for it in its own right, and never mentioned it except when fighting a rearguard action to limit the damage its inclusion was thought to inflict on the system. Chrysippus expended countless hours on more and more ingenious demonstrations of the fact that determinism did not have the undesirable consequences its opponents claimed for it. He devoted his subtlety to showing that, despite what you might think, determinism is not inconsistent with contingency, not inconsistent with what is up to us, not inconsistent with moral praise and blame. In fact, his highest recommendation of it seems to be that it does no harm. But why keep the wretched thing around at all? Was it merely an albatross inherited from his elders?

But when we turn from the polemical contexts to cosmological and theological fragments, we can start to see a positive role for fate and determinism. Bobzien cites, for instance, the quotation from Plutarch in which Chrysippus said that 'no particular thing, not even the smallest, can have happened otherwise than in accordance with the common nature' (129). Here one can start to see how this notion of universal determinism will make a positive contribution to our understanding of the cohesion and unity of the cosmos, and of the relation of parts to the whole. The only trouble is that this passage also clearly states that the common nature which determines all events also necessitates them—if it cannot have happened otherwise, then it happened necessarily.

Bobzien considers this objection, but dismisses it by arguing that the passage is appealing to modal notions that are not the Chrysippean ones enshrined in the official definitions, i.e. the definitions that allow fate to determine without necessitating. She further considers the polemical reply, that this shows that the official modal notions are irrelevant, and that the modal notions employed in the quotation about the common nature are the ones of interest for genuine contingency. But she dismisses this too, saying 'the dis-

pute becomes one about what makes a modality a true, genuine one—a dispute we may want to leave with the ancients' (130).

This seems an odd place to end the issue. For, to begin with, it does not strike me as *prima facie* hopeless or naïve to suppose that some accounts of modality have a better right than others to be considered the true and genuine ones—if someone tells me that 'necessary' means yellow and 'possible' means blue, I shall deny that these are genuine modalities. But furthermore, what shows the irrelevance of the official definitions is not that they fall short of being timelessly true and genuine, but that their only apparent use is to defend fate from the charge that it precludes contingency; whenever we want to put fate to any positive use, we have to switch to the unofficial system. The genuine dog is not the delicate porcelain item you bring out when you are trying to prove you have no dogs in your flat; it is the big shaggy, barking thing that you bring out for company on walks, or when you want to scare off robbers.

This is a further reason why I think that Chrysippus' system of double bookkeeping for 'Necessity' and 'that which is necessary', so compellingly catalogued by Bobzien, is not a harmless matter of terminology. Despite the official stance that Fate does not necessitate, the Stoics' theory of Fate plays certain roles within their philosophy as a whole that are facilitated by making Fate a necessitating force—i.e. there were good reasons, given what the Stoics wanted to do with Fate, to keep on identifying it with the untransgressable, immutable, unpreventable Necessity:

Such is the nature of the cosmos, and such it was, and will be; and what happens cannot happen otherwise than as in fact it does [*οὐχ ὁδόν τε ἄλλως γίγνεσθαι τὰ γιγνόμενα ἢ ὡς νῦν ἔχει*]. . . . If you make the attempt to incline your mind to these things, and to persuade yourself to accept the necessary things [*τὰ ἀναγκαῖα*] willingly, then you will live your life most moderately and harmoniously. (Musonius Rufus fr. 42 Hense)

Bobzien, the staunch defender of Chrysippus, may reject this as evidence of late and unorthodox deviation; but it shows that it was not only 'Chrysippus' opponents [who] mixed up the terminology and realms of the concepts' (136). If Chrysippus himself never exploited the confusion, then we must judge him at best as a scrupulous baker of dubious cakes, which his followers found ideal for having and eating too.

I have tried to raise two objections to the claim that Fate does not



necessitate. But whether they succeed or not, we should at least note in passing the extraordinary structure of this debate on responsibility: to show that the Stoics have a problem with responsibility is not sufficient to show that they leave our actions caused, indeed sufficiently caused, and antecedently determined, the opponents must also show that they leave our actions necessitated, according to an idiosyncratic and possibly incoherent notion of necessity. One wonders why the Stoics' opponents were willing to accept such unfavourable terms for the conduct of the debate—why strain at necessitarian gnats while swallowing causal camels? Conversely, if Chrysippus wanted to be a compatibilist about causation and determination, why not be the sort of compatibilist who blithely maintains the compatibility of responsibility with necessitation as well? It would be reassuring to discover a reason why the ancient battle-line was drawn just there, that would convince us that the Stoics' opponents really were unconcerned about causation. As it stands, I suspect that the debate leaves a misleading impression of what was at stake in their minds. If Plutarch and co. kept renewing the effort to show that Fate necessitates, I suspect this was not because they were unconcerned about the fact that it causes, or thought that real problems emerge only when causing slides one step further into necessitating. Instead, I suspect that the causing and determining already struck them as fundamentally incompatible with responsibility, and that the claim that causing necessitates is just a way of trying to articulate what it is about causing that is already unacceptable.

The same might be said on the other side for Chrysippus: perhaps what really mattered to him was that the causal chain that determines behaviour run through the agents' psyche in such a way that their actions are not the product of external force. There is a perfectly coherent compatibilism to be built from the thought that only external force exculpates, and that what arises from one's internal states or internal nature cannot exculpate, even if it necessitates and is necessitated. So perhaps Chrysippus' attempt to gerrymander the modal definitions was merely aimed at preserving the right connections between force and responsibility; necessity was not of the essence. If so, he would have been wise (I think) to concede that everything that is determined is necessitated, but say that some things that are necessitated are nevertheless not *forced* to occur, i.e. they are not the result of external constraints. Of course,

it would still be open to his opponents to balk at the claim that internals cannot force, or that only force exculpates; they might insist that internal necessitating factors also force, or that even if they do not force they still exculpate by virtue of necessitating. I do not claim that a recasting of the issues along these lines would have made the struggle any less hard-fought, only that it would have made it more easily understood; the participants' motivations (if these speculations capture them) would have been closer to the surface of the debate. If these were the real issues on both sides, then the question of necessity may have been a red herring all along.

##### 5. The role of assent

'But what is the point of having the two-sided capacity to assent (to give or withhold it) as warranty for the fact that our actions are in our power, if whether or not we assent is causally determined by what the individual nature of our minds is like?' (288). This is an important, and perfectly natural, question to ask about the Stoic system, especially in the light of the spectre raised above that the individual nature of our minds, i.e. our characters and dispositions, might necessitate our actions.

'Without such a capacity [sc. of assent], a creature's impulsive impressions fully determine its actions (i.e. what it will try to do, and do, if nothing interferes). The capacity of assent enables the creature to interrupt this pattern' (289). This is Bobzien's answer, and if carefully parsed I think it is correct and consistent with the overall compatibilist reading she advocates. But there is an attractive and false answer that might be suggested by an incorrect parsing of these words, and I think it is worth pointing out that Chrysippus did not intend, and is not entitled to, the parsing that otherwise might be more attractive.

If you take any animal you like, whether rational or not, then about that animal it is true to say that its impulsive impressions determine its actions. This is so, not in the sense that it must act on every one of them—clearly if it is a rational one it will not—but in the sense that for any creature, for every impression, its internal nature already determines whether it will act on it or not. It is also false to say that its capacity of assent (supposing it has one) enables that creature to interrupt the determination of its actions by its

impressions, if we mean that after we have specified the creature and the impression, there is still an open question as to whether it will assent or not.

I have in mind here, say, Dio, who is a rational creature possessed of the capacity of assent. We should remember that if we want to talk about this very creature, i.e. Dio, and think of him as a moral agent in the way that the Stoics did, then we must include in our conception of his agency much more than the very thin fact that he is an adult human being, or that he possesses the faculty of assent; he is not a mere unconditioned rational will. If we want to say anything about *this* agent, and his actions, then we must remember that Dio-the-agent is a complex bundle of desires, beliefs, and preferences, i.e. a complex bundle of dispositions to assent: you are your *prohairesis*, as Epictetus likes to remind us (e.g. *Encheiridion* 5). And about *this* agent, the Stoics unequivocally say, as Bobzien very well brings out, that his impulsive impressions fully determine his actions. Given the sort of philargyric psyche that he has, the impression of money he is about to receive will lead him to pursue money—the impression fully determines that he will act as he will. And the Stoics will unequivocally deny that there is any sense in which Dio can ‘interrupt’ the causal chain that will lead from his reception of this monetary impression to the action of pursuit—given who he is, his reaction to the next impulsive impression is fully determined. The only sense in which he can interrupt the causal chain is that there are some impressions that he is determined not to assent to. But from the fact that impressions of acorns make squirrels jump for joy, whereas the same impression leaves a cat cold, I would not say that the cat has any ‘ability to interrupt a causal chain’, or that the squirrel has an ‘ability to interrupt a causal chain’ leading from impressions of tuna fish to acts of pouncing.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> There may be a residual difference between human and non-human animals, that the animals cannot even receive impulsive impressions of objects unless they are determined to pursue them. That is, the cat can receive sensory impressions of acorns, but not impulsive impressions of acorns-as-to-be-pursued, and ditto for the squirrel and the tuna fish. By contrast, perhaps human beings can receive an impression of an object that is a genuinely impulsive impression, even if they are determined not to assent to it. But this difference makes less of a difference, if we distinguish between impressions that are (as we might say) ‘latently’ impulsive, and those that are ‘effectively’ impulsive. For the person who finds food no temptation, impressions of human food may still be latently impulsive, but not effectively impulsive with respect to their disposition; they do not assent to the impression that food is to be pursued, and do not experience any impulse or undertake any reac-

Rather, they have different internal natures, which are of such a sort that they respond and do not respond to different impressions. The same goes for human beings. This is what happens to human beings when they acquire reason; they develop different dispositions to assent, which make them, so far as their response to impressions goes, like subspecies within a species.

Of course, in insisting that ‘an animal’s impulsive impressions fully determine its actions’, even when the creature is Dio, I am not claiming that Dio’s next impression determines his action independently of the details of his disposition to assent, or that it would equally determine the action of just any arbitrary human being, or that it determines Dio’s action just in virtue of his being a human being. Quite the opposite; the same impression would leave Theon unmoved, given the kind of psyche that he has.<sup>16</sup> But since Theon’s disposition to assent is of such a sort that he will *not* assent to this impression, there is also nothing that *he* can do to ‘interrupt this pattern’. Whether the act of placing some eggs on this plate will leave it occupied by ham and eggs depends on whether it contains ham already; but given a plate with some ham on it, there is no way for the addition of eggs to *this* plate not to produce ham and eggs.

In saying all of this, I am only agreeing with what Bobzien herself writes in the next paragraph: ‘the moral character, as it were, of a person consists in the individual “profile” of the individual nature of their mind by which it is determined to which impression they give assent’ (289)—note the word ‘determined’. My disagreement is instead directed towards the kind of view that might mistakenly be read into statements like the earlier one that ‘When human beings develop reason . . . [they] obtain the ability to interrupt the causal chain from impulsive impression to action.’ There is no human being who possesses any such ability, any more than there is any non-rational animal which possesses it. Given any particular adult human being, or any squirrel, that creature’s actions are fully determined by the impulsive impressions it receives; the only difference consists in the fact that every squirrel is determined, just *qua* squirrel, to pursue acorns, where with humans we should say

tion as a result (and all of that is determined). So this person, and the person for whom impressions of money are only latently impulsive, stand to each other as cat and squirrel; their dispositions have diverged in such a way that they only receive certain impressions *as* effectively impulsive.

<sup>16</sup> Of course ‘sameness’ of impression here has to be read at the type-level.

that each human (sc. each *prohairesis*), at each moment, is either determined to pursue them or determined not to pursue them. This picture is exactly the consequence of taking seriously the 'fatter', psychologically complex picture of the human agent that the Stoics advocate, and that Bobzien does so much to elucidate: once we are firmly convinced that an agent is not an abstract rational will, but a bundle of dispositions, it no longer makes any sense to say that *that* agent has any 'ability to interrupt' their reactions to impressions.

But this 'ability to interrupt the immediate causal chain' was Bobzien's answer to the question about the point of assent. The impression that an answer has been given seems to me to depend entirely on the extent to which talk of 'interrupting causal chains' brings to mind associations or echoes that are indeterministic in flavour—i.e. it seems to promise us that will-o'-the-wisp, rational agency unconstrained by the causal order. I think it is quite clear that Bobzien did not intend this reading of Chrysippus. But with those associations and echoes set firmly to one side, Bobzien's original question returns, I believe, with even greater urgency: what *is* the point of assent?

A better answer can be discerned in Bobzien's own discussion of PHILOPATOR in Chapter 8. Her reconstruction of this theory is another beautiful piece of work; both the philological care with which she treats the textual sources and niceties of vocabulary, and the philosophical adroitness with which she shows the essential agreement of this later theory with Chrysippus' own compatibilism, lead to significant advances in the state of our knowledge. PHILOPATOR's theory is of interest here, though, because it shows us how a consistent and more articulate extension of Chrysippus' view relegates assent to an extremely minor role in the compatibilism itself. Rocks fall, greedy people assent to avaricious impressions: at the level of metaphysics there is no difference. And this is exactly what a compatibilist like PHILOPATOR or Chrysippus should say when asked for the 'point' of assent: the question of assent is of interest in working out some of the details of how our actions are determined, but does not affect the structure of the compatibilism. Had the detailed causal pathway of our determination not run through the way station of assent, we would still be morally responsible for our actions, by the same rationale employed in justifying that claim already, i.e. that the agent's internal state plays a causal role of the right kind and magnitude, and that the differences in agents' actions correlate

with differences in their internal states in such a way as properly to ground our differential judgements of virtue, vice, praise, and blame. PHILOPATOR shows us the dispensability of assent.

## 6. The conic section

Bobzien saves her best performance for the most important topic, namely the analogy of the cylinder and the cone (Chapter 6). All of her skills are on display here, as she patiently hacks through jungles of textual difficulty, thickets of interpretative options, and—most daunting—morasses of previous critical opinion, at long last to emerge onto a sunlit plain from which, as she says, 'we can finally consider the purpose of the analogy'.

The main points appear to be these: As a cylinder and a cone differ in their internal nature, so do you and I. Physically, the differences between individual natures of our minds are due to a difference in tension (*τόνος*) of the mind-pneuma. In every prospective case of assent, whether the incoming impression results in an act of assent to it will depend on the state of tension of that pneuma. Thus, the individual nature of the person's mind is responsible for whether assent is given, as the shape of the pushed object is for whether it will roll. . . . The point of the analogy then is that there are cases in which the external antecedent causes are similar (pushing person, comparable impressions) but the effects differ noticeably in kind; hence *it follows* that the nature of the objects at which the effect takes place (geometrical bodies, human beings) must be responsible for the difference in effect. . . . This point is quite different from some modern arguments: Chrysippus defends responsibility by arguing that someone else would do something else in the same situation or that it is in the range of possible human behaviour to do something else; he does not argue that the same person could do something else in the same situation. (268–70; emphasis original)

This seems to me absolutely right, and it is a point of sufficient importance to justify the massive labours involved in grounding this interpretation solidly in the evidence. But after applauding this central interpretative achievement of the book, I want to suggest that there is a tension in the underlying conception of agency that Bobzien has recovered. Then I also want to address Bobzien's way of presenting the difference between Chrysippus

and the views of 'some modern arguments' about the ability to do otherwise.

What strikes me as paradoxical (in the mild sense) is that even while Chrysippus is highlighting the centrality of my dispositions to my identity as a moral agent, his use of the agent-shifting test invites us to consider an agent independent of dispositions. The impression does not force *me* to assent, I am told, because it does not force someone without my detailed disposition to assent. But if I have fully embraced the Stoic conception of agency, why am I not justified in complaining that the impression does force 'me' to assent, i.e. the very me constituted by my complex bundle of dispositions?

Again, the person who deserves blame for my wicked action is none other than me my wicked self. Now, when we say that *I* am to be blamed for the action, inasmuch as it stemmed from *my* character, the pronouns clearly must refer to a self that includes my current psychological character: I am my *prohairesis*. But given that reading of the pronoun, why should we not say that *I* was forced to act as I did? True enough, if the external impression had been combined with some other *prohairesis* (e.g. a more Socratic one), then the combination would not have produced my assent and my action. But given the *prohairesis* I actually have—the *prohairesis* whose current state is roughly identical with the current state of my self—and given that same impression, Chrysippus will agree that the outcome was inevitable.

Here, then, mild paradox threatens to rise to the level of formal incoherence. The pronoun must switch reference, it must first gain and then lose the shell of psychological complexity, when we move from saying that *I* am to blame (given my character) to saying that *I* was not forced (since something without that character would not have been forced).

There is nothing incoherent about the agent-shifting test *per se*. If we want to find out what it is about this plate that is responsible for the fact that a helping of eggs will leave it occupied by ham and eggs, it makes perfect sense to see how this plate differs from plates that do not yield ham and eggs from the same addition.<sup>17</sup> We find out quite directly: it is the plate's possession of ham that makes the difference. Problems only arise when we

<sup>17</sup> I agree with Bobzien's comments on the ubiquity and validity of this 'underlying mode of reasoning', 270.

combine this conclusion with the thought that the plate is in some sense constituted by its current contents, or more generally, when we are unclear about what sort of fact about this plate its possession of ham is. When I say that the addition of eggs to 'this plate' will yield ham and eggs, I am treating the possession of the ham as partly constitutive of the referent of 'this plate'. When I say that it is possible to put eggs on 'this plate' without thereby yielding ham and eggs, I am disregarding its current contents, and taking 'this plate' to refer to the porcelain purged of the porcine. Either way of talking is separately coherent, and amounts to treating the possession of ham as either an essential part of this plate-of-ham, or an accidental episode in the life of an essentially empty vessel.

What we cannot say is that this plate is responsible for the fact that an addition of eggs will yield ham and eggs (in the light of the fact that this plate is a ham-containing plate), while at the same time saying that the addition of eggs does not force this plate to contain ham and eggs (in the light of the fact that if it did not contain ham no such contents would result)—that clearly involves an illicit shift in the referent of 'this plate'. Perhaps Chrysippus is innocent of any parallel confusion, but I strongly suspect otherwise. And even if a coherent collection of distinctions can be marshalled to his rescue, I want to claim that reflection on the agent-shifting test will inevitably lead from the conception of the agent as constituted by their internal nature and dispositions, to the conception of an agent shorn of dispositions, an abstract agent not identified with their detailed psychology.

This issue is connected to Bobzien's way of distinguishing ancient questions from our modern interest in the agent's ability to do otherwise, both in the quotation above and in her contrast between MR1 and MR2. It is important to note that all of Bobzien's references to the agent's 'ability to do otherwise' involve a specialized sense of that phrase, which must be elucidated by the gloss given on 277. Ancient opponents on both sides of the question, she claims, had no interest in whether it is possible *for the same agent with the same beliefs and desires in the same circumstances* still to do or not do some action—those *ceteris paribus* claims are all packed into her abbreviated references to the 'ability to do otherwise'. But as to the larger question, taken in its

ordinary sense, it is surely clear that the ancients were all keenly interested in the agent's ability to do otherwise—and indeed, that this interest is presupposed by their interest in making sure that it is 'the agent, and not something else' that was causally responsible for the action. Why would we ever be interested in these external something elses—the wind, the pirates, the locked doors, ropes and chains—why would we ever care about binding influences of one sort or another, if it were not for the fact that the influences and constraints make it *impossible for us to do otherwise*?

But my suggestion is not merely that Bobzien's way of phrasing the debate is misleading to the uncaredful reader—since ways of phrasing are always somewhat arbitrary, and the fate of the uncaredful readers is up to them. Rather, my suggestion is that the dichotomy she offers between concerns with autonomy (her MR1) and concerns with whether the agent 'could have done otherwise' in her special sense (her MR2) has the effect of concealing the real evolution of the ancient debate over freedom and responsibility—an evolution whose early stages she has done so much to elucidate.<sup>18</sup>

Here is the problem: by putting the two conceptions as she does, she invites us to ask: when, and why, did people stop asking about MR1, and start asking about MR2? Why did people become interested in the agent's ability to do otherwise, if they had never been interested in it before? Why did the comparison with a second, distinct agent cease to satisfy them, when it had previously seemed sufficient? But a mere change of phrasing dissolves the appearance of a radical discontinuity in the debate, and sets us on the track of more fruitful questions. Relabel the two conceptions 'causal insulation from physical externals' and 'causal insulation from one's own character' (*vel sim.*), and we can see how attention shifted from one to the other seamlessly.

The question all along was whether agents are free to do otherwise, i.e. not determined to act as they do by factors outside the agent. What shifted was the conception of how 'big' the agent is, i.e. how much psychological complexity is actually internal to the agent's self, and correspondingly how much of their psychology

<sup>18</sup> Especially in 'The Inadvertent Conception and Late Birth of the Free-Will Problem', *Phronesis*, 43 (1998), 133–75.

ought to be considered 'outside' their real selves. The ancient view that Bobzien emphasizes in her book is the view that an agent is a large, bulky affair, which includes or is indeed primarily constituted by the desires, beliefs, and dispositions that distinguish one agent from another. On that model, the agent's freedom from things 'outside' the agent is equivalent to the agent's causal insulation from physical externals.

But there was already a different conception in the air, as early as the *Phaedo*, according to which my desires are not part of me, not even part of my soul properly speaking, but rather an outgrowth of my body, conceived of as something distinct and alien from me (66 B–D). The real me, the real agent, is a much slimmer thing on the *Phaedo* model, and on this model it already makes sense to think of the agent as being 'enslaved to' desires, desires that are not properly a part of the agent and so outside the agent. Here, as it seems to me, we have the origins of the competing conception that will in time lead to the demand that a truly responsible agent be causally insulated even from their own character, even from their own desires and dispositions. It is always the ability to do otherwise that is at stake; the agent's ability to do otherwise than as outside factors determine. What changes over time is the boundary between the agent and the outside. Now to say this much is only to hint at a story, while Bobzien is already leading the discipline in writing up the full and exhaustive account, both in this book and in a series of related articles. But to the extent that the final story will be a communal one, and to the extent that her book will rightfully be the centrepiece and touchstone for all future discussions, it is worth making the proposal that a shift in terminology may clarify our view of the central problem.

Furthermore, this way of viewing the historical evolution connects up several of the puzzles I have pointed to: both the problem with the modal definitions and the problem with cylinders and cones can be seen as difficulties about how to think about this intermediate shell of psychological complexity and where to account for it in our theorizing. Thus the historical evolution may have been partly influenced by incoherences latent from the outset.

## 7. Methodological coda

'But here we have long left the street of sober scholarship, and followed the unmarked path of conjecture' (173). With these words Bobzien abruptly cuts off one of her interesting discussions of the philosophical options open to Chrysippus at a particular juncture. The comment may with even greater justice be applied to my discussions. Bobzien's focus throughout the book is on providing a definitive account of what, in fact, Chrysippus and his opponents said; what they might have said, what they could have said, what they perhaps should have said instead, are outside its purview. We are all greatly indebted to her for the disciplined way in which she remained on the street of sober scholarship, and this discipline doubtless contributed to her ability to proceed so far down that street—further than one might have thought possible. But I for one would have been equally grateful to her for forays into the trackless waste on either side. Indeed, I would not characterize departures from historical scholarship in these terms to begin with; I prefer the image of logical space, the space of possible positions that surrounds any attested philosophical view, where the paths are marked by logical relations and discovered by dialectical explorations.

Connected to this preference for sober scholarship is a general refusal to attribute views to thinkers unless they express them unambiguously, or unless there is an unambiguous interpretative need for their attribution. There is much to be said for this rule of thumb in historical reconstruction, but I think it tends to have the effect of granting unmerited victories to Chrysippus. Because we are frequently reduced to reconstructing his opponents' positive views from what is left of their objections to him, and reconstructing their objections from the responses that he gave, this rule of thumb requires us to tailor their positive views and their objections to the minimum needed to motivate his responses. But if we can ascribe to his opponents no objections deeper or more troubling than what is required by the responses he fashioned in reply, then he is guaranteed to win, or at least do no worse than a draw. And while my admiration for Chrysippus' philosophical brilliance is almost boundless, I do not believe that he was so lucky (or unlucky) as never to face an objection whose full force he could not

overcome. There are deep objections to compatibilism, as there are to indeterminism and the other options. From his shallow responses, we cannot be certain that he encountered them. But I would hesitate to conclude that he did not encounter them, either, especially when the record of an objection's repetition over the centuries leaves the clear impression that his replies did not produce any feeling among his opponents that he had addressed the real concern.

One of the deepest issues raised by this disagreement has to do with our ability to discriminate, at long distances, between two very different cases. It may be that a philosophical debate has changed its fundamental terms over the course of the millennia, or it may be that a 'perennial question'—i.e. one we now find pressing—was already being asked back then, but being answered badly. Were all parties to the ancient dispute over 'what depends on us' really content with the idea that we are responsible for actions that come from us, even if we were fated to perform them? Or was there already 'in the air', as it were, a desire for some richer sense of freedom (as incoherent as it may be)? Was the Chrysippean claim that I am responsible for what I do inasmuch as *someone else* would have done otherwise taken as a perfectly adequate response to the question as then asked, or a disappointing evasion of a question we still face?

There is, of course, a scholarly tendency to project back onto antiquity the preoccupations of today, either by supposing that our problems have always faced thinkers, or that it was inevitable they would be encountered if thought about clearly. But to say that earlier objections do not unambiguously express a later thought—even to say that the earlier debates can be given some coherent reconstruction without reference to the later thought—does not entail that earlier debaters may not have been motivated, on some level, by concerns only fully articulated at later stages in the debate.

This is not a disagreement on principles of methodology, so much as an observation that sensitivity to historical distance is a virtue, and thus located in the mean. It is possible to err by ignoring the difference between our own concerns and those of a remote era; it is also possible to err by emphasizing differences of expression to the prejudice of possible continuities of thought. I find it more plausible than Bobzien does that Chrysippus' ancient opponents may

have already been motivated by inchoate indeterministic instincts. But disagreements over the more and less are notoriously incapable of crisp resolution.

And thus my most assiduous efforts to find anything to criticize in this book are reduced to saws and platitudes. Finding nothing in it to fault, I am reduced to lamenting how uniformly well-argued and solidly grounded its contents are: why can it not contain some irresponsible speculation, in addition? It is a sad day for the captious when a work this astoundingly good comes out. But for students of Stoicism, historians of philosophy, and anyone who delights to see an intellectual triumph, it is a time for celebration.

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