

CONTEMPLATIVE WITHDRAWAL IN THE HELLENISTIC AGE

ERIC BROWN

Department of Philosophy
Washington University in St. Louis
eabrown@wustl.edu

ABSTRACT. I reject the traditional picture of philosophical withdrawal in the Hellenistic Age by showing how both Epicureans and Stoics oppose, in different ways, the Platonic and Aristotelian assumption that contemplative activity is the greatest good for a human being. Chrysippus the Stoic agrees with Plato and Aristotle that the greatest good for a human being is virtuous activity, but he denies that contemplation exercises virtue. Epicurus more thoroughly rejects the assumption that the greatest good for a human being is virtuous activity. He maintains that the greatest good for a human being is the tranquility that virtuous activity always and contemplative activity sometimes brings about.

1. A Disagreement about the Contemplative Life

I have two stories to tell. The first is a counter-narrative. At least since Hegel, histories of philosophy have asserted that in the decades after Aristotle, philosophers favored the quiet life, withdrawn from the life of active, public citizenship. The historians say that the philosophers had virtually no choice in the matter. Rather, the age after Aristotle was also the age after Alexander, and Alexander destroyed the polis and left in their wake three empires. Consequently, the polis exerted a weaker pull, and the

philosophers found fulfillment within themselves and with a thinner attachment to the cosmopolis.¹

This is fiction. It exaggerates the polis' death,² and it misidentifies the lovers of quiet withdrawal. In the decades before Alexander, during some of the stablest, most peaceful decades for polis-centered life in Attica, Plato and Aristotle insisted that a person in ordinary circumstances can do no better than to withdraw from public affairs and dedicate oneself to the contemplation of eternal truths. Then, in the next century, after the alleged collapse of the polis, the Stoics reject this ideal in order to serve the polis.

This essay owes much to Ryan Balot, who invited me to think more about apragmosunê in Greek thought. I thank him for that and Chris Bobonich for the invitation to participate in the symposium. I also thank the audience in San Francisco for their helpful questions. I have incorporated a few of its suggestions, but the essay remains a programmatic, sweeping lecture. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

¹ See Hegel, Lectures on the History of Philosophy (2:234-235, 274-276), and Zeller, Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics, 16-18. In the twentieth century, some version of this tale is quite common. For a few examples, in addition to the thirteenth edition of Zeller's Outlines, 20 and 207-208, see Armstrong, An Introduction to Ancient Philosophy, 114-116; Bevan, Stoics and Sceptics, 32; MacIntyre, A Short History of Ethics, 100; and Sinclair, A History of Greek Political Thought, 261. As the reference to Hegel might have suggested, this was not always a purely reductive story. So, for example, Mewaldt ("Das Weltbürgertum in der Antike," 182-183) says, "The penetration of Greeks at that time [viz., in the wake of Alexander the Great] into unknown reaches also widened the view of the spirit, and so there remains a reasonable question whether a cosmopolitan striving was not always in the Greek spirit and merely awakened and unfolded at that time by outside events." Recently, there has been more explicit resistance to the old tendency; see especially Long, Hellenistic Philosophy, 2-4. See also Brown, "Hellenistic Cosmopolitanism."

² Several historians have challenged the traditional picture of politics in the Hellenistic Age. See, for example, Habicht, Athens from Alexander to Antony. It is also worth noting that the traditional story exaggerates the pre-Alexandrian health of the polis. It is not as though there were no empires limiting political action before the Macedonians took charge.

Even the Epicureans, who favor quiet withdrawal, offer considerably weaker attachment to contemplative activity.³

I start with this counter-narrative not because it is my purpose today to give a full reckoning and defense of it. In particular, I am not going to discuss in any depth Plato's and Aristotle's endorsement of contemplative withdrawal. Not everyone manages to accept this. In my view, Plato's Republic, Phaedo, and Theaetetus plainly say that the philosophers who live the best possible human life detach themselves from ordinary political concerns and desire to contemplate the way things are instead of serving the common good of the polis. That is why the Republic says that if you want one of these otherworldly thinkers to help out, you must legislate to compel them. And in my view, Aristotle makes this still plainer. He picks up on another of Plato's ways of endorsing contemplative withdrawal and says that best human life is devoted to being like a god. But as I say, I am not going to defend that part of the story today.⁴

Instead, I want to explore the Stoic and Epicurean reasons for dissent from the ideal of contemplative activity because these reasons illuminate the

³ One might want to say on behalf of the traditional story that Plato and Aristotle did not argue against the normative authority of the polis so much as they acknowledged a source of value that in special cases called for an apolitical life. So, the defense goes, Alexander still brought on the collapse of the polis' authority. But this will not do. The Platonic-Aristotelian elevation of the contemplative above the political ideal still serves to undermine the idea that the polis is the ultimate source of normative authority. So there is an intellectual break with the polis that predates Alexander.

⁴ I defend it elsewhere. For Plato, see "Justice and Compulsion for Plato's Philosopher-Rulers," "Minding the Gap in Plato's Republic," and "Plato and the Rule of Wisdom." For Aristotle, see "Aristotle on the Choice of Lives: Two Concepts of Self-Sufficiency."

theme of our symposium, virtue and contemplation. In a nutshell, Plato and Aristotle believe that a person does best to withdraw from politics because they believe that contemplation is the most virtuous activity a human being is capable of. The Stoics argue, by contrast, that contemplation is not the most virtuous activity, and the Epicureans argue that contemplation does not especially manifest human virtue but is one of several ways a human sustains a good life.

But that is just a first approximation. In what follows, I concentrate on Chrysippus the Stoic and on Epicurus to uncover more carefully their grounds for arguing that contemplation is not especially virtuous human activity. These grounds point toward the second story that I want to tell. According to the first story, there is a divide between Plato and Aristotle, who believe that contemplation is the most virtuous activity for humans, and Stoics and Epicureans, who do not. According to the second, the divide lies between Epicureans and the rest.⁵ The difference is not merely that Epicureans are hedonists whereas the others are not. The difference concerns how one should relate one's actions to the grounds for success in action.

⁵ I do not mean to suggest that the Epicureans are utterly unique on this score. What sets them apart from the Socratic tradition that links Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics (among others) joins them to a Democritean tradition (on which see Warren, [Epicurus and Democritean Ethics](#)).

2. Chrysippus against Contemplation

The Stoic Chrysippus thinks that a human being can live a perfectly successful life even in quite unfortunate circumstances. On his view, real success is wise action, and ordinary advantages such as money, health, and political freedom make no difference to whether one is acting wisely or not. So the poor, sickly, and unfree can be just as successful as the wealthy, healthy, and free. But Chrysippus nevertheless thinks that if circumstances allow one some options, there are reasons to prefer some careers to others, and he wrote a work titled On Lives to explain what careers a Stoic would prefer, if circumstances were favorable.⁶

In On Lives, Chrysippus maintains that one should take up a political life if circumstances permit and, next to a life at a king's court or an active citizen's life, one should prefer a life devoted to knowledge and teaching. But he is very careful to distinguish this life of knowledge and teaching from

⁶ I collect the evidence for Chrysippus' On Lives and provide an interpretation of that work in Stoic Cosmopolitanism, chapter 7. On Lives has not been sufficiently studied. Erskine (The Hellenistic Stoa, 64-70) gives a brief discussion that is helpful but unfortunately distorted by his attempt to establish the Stoics as democrats. The even briefer discussion by Joly ("Le Thème Philosophique des Genres de Vie dans l'Antiquité Classique," 143-147) is still more problematic. Joly believes that Chrysippus' work is simply a polemic targeting Epicurus' On Lives and that the careers Chrysippus discusses are not preferred but merely "not incompatible with his conception of the sage" (144; cf. 146). Joly bases this assessment on three alleged points of contact between the On Lives of Chrysippus and Epicurus. But three points of contact are far too few to establish that one work was directly and polemically aimed at the other, especially when both works are on similar enough topics that some points of contact are inevitable. Furthermore, one of the three points of contact depends upon acceptance of a suspect textual emendation (for DL VII VII 188-189), while another requires misconstruing Chrysippus' attack on the "scholastic life" as a narrowly anti-Epicurean assault (see below).

the "scholastic" or leisurely life (sxolastikŌw bēow).⁷ Aristotle's contemplator enjoys a leisured life, as does the Epicurean, who withdraws from politics.⁸

Plutarch reports that Chrysippus opposes both:

Chrysippus himself in the fourth book of On Lives thinks that the scholastic life differs not at all from the life of pleasure. I shall quote his very words: "Everyone who supposes that the scholastic life is especially incumbent upon philosophers seem to me to err seriously from the start by presuming that one should do this for the sake of some pastime or other similar thing and spend one's whole life in some such fashion—that is, if it is seen clearly, 'pleasantly', for their intention must not pass unnoticed, since many say this openly and not a few more say it obscurely."⁹

⁷ The word sxolastikŌw is originally tied to the word for leisure sxolÆ. It seems from DL V 37 that Theophrastus uses the word sxolastikŌw as an insulting description of a pedant and not as a rejection of leisured life. But the evidence for On Lives suggests that Chrysippus concern was leisure, not pedantry.

⁸ For Aristotle, see especially EN X 7 1177b4-1177b6. For Epicurus' withdrawal from politics, see SV 58; DL X 119, which cites Epicurus' On Lives; and Sen, Oti 3.2. (Note that, according to Seneca, Epicurus rejects the political life, "unless something intervenes" (*nisi si quid intervenerit*). In other words, in exceptional circumstances, Epicureans may find themselves forced to engage in politics. That explains why some Epicureans did engage in the middle of the first century BCE, during the Roman civil war; see Momigliano's review of Farrington and Sedley, "The Ethics of Brutus and Cassius." For Epicurus' pursuit of wisdom: Ep. Men 122 ff.; KD 11-13; SV 27, 41, 54; and Sextus, M XI 169.

⁹ Plutarch, Stoic rep 1033cd: aÈtÚw goËn XrÊsippow §n t" tetártf perç Bēvn oÈdçn oçetai tÚn sxolastikÚn bēon toÈ ðdonikoÈ diaf°rein: aÈtáw dç parayÆsomai táw l°jeiw: "soi dç Ípolambánousi filosŌfoiw §pibálllein málista tÚn sxolastikÚn bēon ép' érxœw t€ moi dokoËsi diamartánein, ÍponooËntew diagvgœw tinow ßneken de»n toÈto poiē»n μ èllou tinÚw toÈtf paraplhsœou kaç tÚn ïlon bēon oítv pwv dielkËsai: toÈto d' §stin, in saf«w yevrhy^a, ðdevw: oÈ gár de» lanyánein tŌn ÍpŌnoian aÈt«n, poll«n mçn saf«w toÈto legŌntvn oÈk Úlégvn d' édhlŌteron."

Notice that Chrysippus is not necessarily arguing against any and all leisure. Rather, he opposes the life dedicated to pleasure, and for that reason he rejects the leisured life of the Epicureans—which is openly dedicated to pleasure—and that of the Peripatetics—which is cryptically dedicated to pleasure.¹⁰ By contrast, Chrysippus thinks that the life of knowledge and teaching should be devoted to helping other people pursue the common good. So, for him, the life of knowledge and teaching is not an apolitical life but politics by other means.¹¹

Chrysippus' rejection of the Epicurean ideal of leisure seems straightforward enough, although I will complicate the Epicurean position below. But for now why would Chrysippus maintain that the Peripatetic who favors the life of quiet contemplation must be devoted to pleasure? I think that he cannot see another explanation, since the standard Peripatetic defense of a particular kind of activity fails to work for contemplation. Aristotle says that one should act for the sake of one's success (εὐδαιμονία)

¹⁰ So also Cherniss, *ad loc.* This tells against Joly's claim ("Le Thème Philosophique des Genres de Vie," 144) that Chrysippus' On Lives is a narrowly anti-Epicurean polemic. I was asked in San Francisco (by Richard Bett?) if Academics could not be among Chrysippus' target here. I think this is possible, though less likely, since the Academics in Chrysippus' time would not have dogmatically supported the life of leisure.

¹¹ I argue for this reading in Stoic Cosmopolitanism, chapter 7. But for some initial plausibility, see Cicero, Fin III 65-66. In this regard, Chrysippus is much closer to the Socrates of Plato's Socratic dialogues than Plato and Aristotle are. Socrates characterizes himself as doing politics (Plato, Gorgias 521d) even when he is not engaged in traditional citizen's business but is dedicated to knowledge and teaching. Not only is the apparently apolitical philosopher actually political, but the apparently unphilosophical politician can actually be philosophical because philosophy is not the name of a particular career as opposed to others but the name of a way of life that one can achieve in any career or circumstance.

and that one's success is activity in accordance with human virtue.¹² Human virtue, in turn, is what makes one a good human being. But the activity of withdrawn contemplation is not in accordance with any virtue that makes one a good human being. Humans are naturally political animals: the activities that express the virtues that make them good are politically engaged. Aristotle and the Peripatetics must simply forget this when they praise contemplative activity as the best that humans can achieve. On what grounds could the Peripatetics be drawn away from their account of human virtue and endorse contemplative activity? Chrysippus supposes that these grounds must be pleasure.

This might seem unfair. The Peripatetic might insist that not pleasure but the ideal of becoming like god attracts him to the contemplative life. Although withdrawn contemplation is not in accordance with any virtue that makes one a good human being, it is in accordance with a virtue that makes one a god.

But I think that Chrysippus would be right to ignore this sort of appeal. He is far from rejecting the ideal of becoming like god. He thinks that the Stoic sage lives like Zeus, her mind in perfect agreement with the divine

¹² That is Aristotle's position (see my "Wishing for Fortune, Choosing Activity" for defense), but later Peripatetics, under pressure from skeptical attacks on Stoicism and on the space of possible ethical theories, broaden their account to include not just virtuous activity but certain goods external to the soul. The expansion does not matter for my purposes here.

right reason that organizes the cosmos.¹³ But Chrysippus rejects the Aristotelian theology. The Stoic god actively sustains things and does not simply think itself. This is a problem for the Peripatetic. The problem is not that Peripatetic theology is more ridiculous than Stoic theology. Rather, the problem is that the Peripatetic has nothing but the theology to tell him to live a contemplative life. His more general ethical reflections do not lead in that direction, and the general idea of becoming like god does not lead in that direction.

Chrysippus more charitably assumes that the Peripatetic has a reason for pursuing the contemplative life and does not slavishly imitate the authorities he recognizes. That reason is pleasure. And Chrysippus rejects pleasure as an end for action.

His rejection of withdrawal from politics for pleasure can be explained in many ways. But perhaps the most obvious explanation starts with the idea that one should always act for the sake of living well. Chrysippus then says that living well consists simply in acting virtuously, that living virtuously consists simply in acting with knowledge, and that knowledge consists in a

¹³ The anonymous commentator on Plato's Theatetus forgets this when he neatly contrasts the Stoic account of justice based on *ofikevsiw* and the Platonic account of justice based on *imo€vsiw ye*“ (In Tht. 7.14-20).

perfectly coherent set of psychological commitments.¹⁴ This knowledge requires in turn that one's psychological commitments be consistent with human nature and the nature of the world. (One must have some natural commitments—that is a brute fact—and so one cannot achieve coherence without them.) And humans are naturally political animals.¹⁵ That is, they naturally share their end of living well and their pursuit of that end with other human beings. Their end is not private, but common. So, the private pursuit of pleasure, withdrawn from political activity, is not something one should do.

Chrysippus' argument, on this sketch, turns on some bold empirical claims about human nature. He believes, in effect, that psychological coherence requires a commitment to sharing one's end of living well with other human beings. If that is true—and it would be far from straightforward to show that it is or is not—Chrysippus is warranted in

¹⁴ The first two claims are especially evident at Stobaeus II 7.6e 77,16-19. For the identification of virtue as knowledge, see Stobaeus II 7.5b 58,9-11 and II 7.5b4 62,15-20, and DL VII 90. All of the standard virtues are defined as forms of knowledge (*§pistōmai*): see Stobaeus II 7.5b1-2 59,4-62,6 and DL VII 92-93. The identification of knowledge with a coherent psychology is suggested by the insistence that knowledge, whether it is a cognitive grasp, a system of grasps, or a state of receiving impressions, is secure, stable, and unshakeable by reason or argument. (See Stobaeus II 7.5l 73,19-74,1; DL VII 47; Sextus *M* VII 151; Pseudo-Galen SVF 2.93; Philo SVF 2.95; and cf. Cicero, *Acad* I 41-42, who attributes the account to Zeno of Citium, the founder of Stoicism.) After all, to be unshakeable by argument, one's belief must be firmly nested in a web of beliefs that is free from falsity: with any falsity, Socratic refutation is possible.

¹⁵ See Stobaeus II 7.5b1 59,6 and 7.11m 109,17-18; DL VII 123; Cicero, *Fin* III 68; Marcian SVF 3.314; etc.

concluding that the goal is not a private state of the agent, not the agent's own pleasure.

3. Epicurus and Contemplative Virtue

Now, Chrysippus targets the Epicureans for favoring the "scholastic" or leisured life, and that might seem to conflict with my original suggestion that Epicurus opposes Plato's and Aristotle's idealization of contemplative virtue. But there is no inconsistency. Epicurus does in fact favor withdrawal from politics and a leisured life. But he does not do so on the grounds that only a quiet life of leisure allows one to concentrate on contemplation as the most virtuous activity a human can do. Epicurus, unlike Plato and Aristotle, does not think that contemplation is the most virtuous activity a human can do. The central point here is that on Epicurus' view, no activity is to be done unless it brings about an absence of pain and disturbance. Sometimes, contemplation will fit that bill. But sometimes, it will not. This is a demotion. On Epicurus' view, contemplative activity is not an essential constituent of that for the sake of which we should do everything we do. It is, instead, one way among others of bringing about that for the sake of which we should do everything we do.

Let me fill this in a bit. Epicurus holds that one should value nothing but pleasure for its own sake. Everything else is to be valued because it

brings about pleasure. That is why he insists that every choice should be referred to pleasure or more specifically to the absence of disturbance and pain that he identifies as limit of pleasure.¹⁶ It is also why the Epicureans so readily insist that pleasure is to be sought for its own sake (Cicero, Fin I 31), and why they so readily deny that anything else is.

This point has been resisted. Those who want to say that Epicurus values something other than pleasure for its own sake generally point to friendship and in particular to one of the Vatican Sentences that appears to say that friendship is to be chosen for its own sake. But first, the manuscript for Vatican Sentence 23 does not say that friendship is to be chosen for its own sake but that friendship is by itself a virtue, and second, several of the Vatican Sentences are best attributed to one of Epicurus' followers and not to Epicurus himself. So this cannot count as evidence unless we are sure that the manuscript is mistaken and that the attribution to Epicurus is secure. But in fact, the philological objection to the manuscript reading is not compelling, and there is independent evidence that attributes something very much like the idea that friendship is worth choosing for its own sake not to Epicurus but to his followers who were more timid in the face of Academic criticism.¹⁷

¹⁶ See Ep. Men. 128-129, RS 25; cf. DL X 34, Cicero Fin. I 23.

¹⁷ I develop the points in this paragraph in "Epicurus on the Value of Friendship" and "Politics and Society." The independent evidence is Cicero, Fin I 69, with all of Fin I 65-70 and II 82-85.

Now if pleasure alone is valuable for its own sake and everything else is valued merely because it promotes pleasure, then surely an activity such as contemplation has value only insofar as it promotes pleasure. In the extant works, Epicurus does not talk of Platonic or Aristotelian contemplation, exactly, but he does insist on the value of studying nature.¹⁸ But he also characterizes this value. He says, "If suspicions about celestial phenomena and death did not trouble us—were they never anything to us and were failing to grasp the limits of pains and appetites also never anything to us—then we would have no need for natural philosophy."¹⁹ And even more straightforwardly, he says, "First, believe that the end of knowledge of celestial phenomena, whether they are described together with other things or all by themselves, is nothing other than freedom from disturbance and firm conviction, just as it is for everything else, too."²⁰ Epicurus is consistent about this. Forms of learning and study that he does

¹⁸ He calls this study by the name that Aristotle gives to contemplation—*yevrēa* (see esp. *Ep.Hdt.* 35 and *Ep.Pyth.* 116—but as he uses this term and the related verb (which occurs throughout both of those letters—see Arrighetti's index), he evidently means that to engage in *yevrēa* is just to engage in the (usually mental) seeing that something is or is not the case. The explanations that Epicurus *yevrē*, many of which are explanations of perceptible phenomena, are not the rarefied objects of Platonic or Aristotelian contemplation. The point is not just that Epicurus' system has no place for Platonic Forms or Aristotle's unmoved movers and heavenly spheres, but that Epicurus does not limit *yevrēa* to reflection on (at least nearly) changeless, fundamental entities (as he might have done, with his atoms).

¹⁹ *RS* 11: *Efi mhyçn smçw afl t«n mete≈rvn Ípocfai ±n≈xloun kaç afl perç yanātu, mÆ pote prÚw smçw ñ ti, ¶ti te tÚ mØ katanoe>n toÁw ~rouw t«n elghdØnvn kaç t«n §piyumi«n, oÊk in prosedeØmeya fusiologēaw.*

²⁰ *Ep.Pyth.* 85: *Pr«ton mçn oÔn mØ êllo ti t°low §k t°w perç mete≈rvn gn≈sew eþte katå sunafØn legom°nvn eþte aÊtotel«w nomēzein e%onai ≥per étarajēan kaç pēstin b°baion, kayāper kaç §pç t«n loip«n.*

not find relevant to eliminating disturbance and thereby fostering pleasure he regards as worthless. This is his attitude toward dialectic and music, for just two subjects that were held in high regard among many Greek philosophers.²¹

Still, there are scholars who want to resist this point, too. Long and Sedley maintain that Epicurus "sees the attainment of tranquility as the primary goal of philosophy, but he also considers the process of attaining it to be immensely pleasurable."²² Their primary evidence is Vatican Sentence 27:

In other pursuits the reward comes at the end and is hard won, but in philosophy the enjoyment keeps pace with knowledge, for it is not learning followed by entertainment, but learning and entertainment at the same time.²³

But this does not say that philosophy is valuable even if it fails to bring pleasure. Rather, it says that philosophy reliably brings pleasure even before one quits doing it. Long and Sedley's use of the word "pleasurable" is potentially misleading. Epicurus need not think that philosophical activity is

²¹ For dialectic, see DL X 31 and cf. Cicero, Fin I 22. (Also note the book-titles Against the Megarics (by Epicurus, DL X 27) and Against the Dialecticians (by Metrodorus, DL X 24). For music, see Plutarch, Non posse 1095c, and Cicero, Fin I 72.

²² The Hellenistic Philosophers, 1:156.

²³ SV 27, trans. LS, lightly modified: Ἐπεὶ μὲν τῶν ἑλλήνων ψιθδευμαίων μὲν ὁλίγωρον τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ἔχουσιν ἐν τῇ φιλοσοφίᾳ, ἡ δὲ φιλοσοφία συντρέχει τῇ γνώσει τῆς ἀληθείας: οὗτο ἄρα μετὰ μαῦχσιν ἐπιθυμῶσι, ἐλλὰ ἔμα μαῦχσι καὶ ἐπιθυμῶσι.

itself a pleasure. He need only think that it is intrinsically pleasant, that is, that it reliably causes pleasure. And, indeed, he must say this if he is to avoid contradicting what he says elsewhere about the value of everything other than pleasure.

If the reference to simultaneity be thought to undermine the thought that philosophy is a mere instrument of bringing pleasure, an example might help. I brush my teeth. I do not do this because I value tooth-brushing for its own sake but only because I value dental health. If I could secure dental health cheaply and easily without brushing my teeth, I would. But alas, I am stuck brushing my teeth. Nevertheless, I promote dental health at the same time as I brush my teeth. It is not as though I brush, and then dental health settles in after I have set my brush down. Just this point is what Epicurus is making about philosophy and pleasure. Philosophical activity reliably brings one pleasure even while one is doing it.

Philosophical activity generally might reliably bring Epicureans pleasure and so be valuable to a life lived well. Epicurus certainly thinks that some kinds of philosophical inquiry are necessary for achieving pleasure and thus a life lived well. But whether any particular philosophical activity such as Platonic and Aristotelian contemplation has this necessary or even reliable role is far from clear. Nothing that Epicurus says would suggest that it does. But if one were to insist, in the absence of evidence, that there is a central role for contemplation in the Epicurean life, I have no strong desire to deny

this. Rather, I want to insist on the stark difference between the way Epicurus would evaluate such activity and the way that Plato and Aristotle evaluate it. Epicurus evaluates activities and conceives of virtues differently. This is the story that I have been trying to set up. Now it is time to make it more explicit.

4. A Disagreement about Virtuous Activity

It is widely though by no means universally agreed that the Greek philosophers generally share a commitment to eudaimonism. That is, they believe that one should always act for the sake of one's own eudaimonia or success.²⁴ Then it is frequently noted that the Greeks disagree about what counts as success. The Stoics, for example, believe that success is virtuous activity whereas the Epicureans believe that it is pleasure. But, in fact, the disagreement runs far deeper. They differ about what it means to act for the sake of success. For the Epicureans, this is a matter of acting so as to bring about a state of affairs in which one has success. For the Stoics, by contrast, this is a matter of instantiating success, that is, of acting successfully.

²⁴ The Cyrenaics are the exception. See especially DL II 87-88 and O'Keefe, "The Cyrenaics on Pleasure, Happiness, and Future-Concern."

This is plain if we look more closely. The Stoics think that the end for the sake of which one should do everything one does is not happiness or success, strictly speaking, but being happy or successful.²⁵ It is an activity, not a state. The Epicureans, by contrast, identify the end with happiness, happiness with pleasure, and pleasure with the state of being free from disturbance and pain. So, for the Stoics, one acts for the sake of the end when one instantiates the kind of activity that is the end. For the Epicureans, by contrast, seek to bring about the end for the sake of which they act.

Aristotle is on the same side of this particular divide as the Stoics. He says that one should act for the sake of happiness or success—he does not make the persnickety point that one should act for the sake of being happy or successful—but he identifies happiness as a kind of activity. Indeed, he insists repeatedly on the distinction by noting that virtue cannot be happiness since a virtuous person could sleep his life away. Only virtuous activity could count. (For what it is worth, I suspect that Aristotle is

²⁵ The first two claims are especially evident at Stobaeus II 7.6e 77,16-19. For the identification of virtue as knowledge, see Stobaeus II 7.5b 58,9-11 and II 7.5b4 62,15-20, and DL VII 90. All of the standard virtues are defined as forms of knowledge ($\sigma\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$): see Stobaeus II 7.5b1-2 59,4-62,6 and DL VII 92-93. The identification of knowledge with a coherent psychology is suggested by the insistence that knowledge, whether it is a cognitive grasp, a system of grasps, or a state of receiving impressions, is secure, stable, and unshakeable by reason or argument. (See Stobaeus II 7.5l 73,19-74,1; DL VII 47; Sextus M VII 151; Pseudo-Galen SVF 2.93; Philo SVF 2.95; and cf. Cicero, Acad I 41-42, who attributes the account to Zeno of Citium, the founder of Stoicism.) After all, to be unshakeable by argument, one's belief must be firmly nested in a web of beliefs that is free from falsity: with any falsity, Socratic refutation is possible.

responding to something that is unclear in Plato's dialogues. To the extent that it is clear in those dialogues that the end is virtue or virtuous activity, it is unclear whether the end is virtue or virtuous activity. I tend to think that Plato is justified in overlooking the distinction, at least for practical purposes.)

Of course, this does not yet put Aristotle on the same side as the Stoics, if he holds that in addition to virtuous activity happiness includes goods external to the soul such as health and wealth. Now is not the right time to argue that he does not say this, that he believes that one should act for the sake of virtuous activity alone. Later Peripatetics no doubt did fold external goods into their account of the end, but this responds to the need to distinguish themselves from the Stoics and to the skeptical pressures exemplified by the so-called Carneadea divisio (in Book Five of Cicero's On Ends).

Without fully engaging the evidence to sustain those assertions, I want to note that Aristotle also makes explicit a question that does in fact face anyone who believes that one should always instantiate living well. The question is, Can one fully or only partly instantiate living well in a short period of activity? Aristotle clarifies his view that one can only partly instantiate living well in one day, "for one swallow does not make a Spring, nor does one day, and in this way neither one day nor a short time makes a man blessed and happy" (EN I 7, 1098a18-20). The Stoics seem to

disagree, although Plutarch finds evidence on both sides of this issue (Stoic. rep. 1046c-e, Comm. not. 1061f-1062a).

But any disagreement of the Stoics and Aristotle on this question pales before the difference between their shared position and the Epicureans'. On the Epicurean account, eudaimonism is a kind of consequentialism, the egoistic kind. But the Stoics and Aristotle do not have a consequentialist position at all. Their view is that one should instantiate living well, partly or wholly.

So, on the Stoic and Aristotelian account, the activity one chooses is partly or wholly identical to one's ultimate aim. On the Epicurean account, by contrast, the activity is not identical to one's ultimate aim but a mere means to that aim.

Sources Cited

- Armstrong, A.H. An Introduction to Ancient Philosophy. Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1957.
- Bevan, Edwyn. Stoics and Sceptics. Oxford: Clarendon, 1913. reprinted Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, 1959.
- Brown, Eric. "Aristotle on the Choice of Lives: Two Concepts of Self-Sufficiency." in Quel choix de vie? Études sur les rapports entre theôria et praxis chez Aristote, ed. Pierre Destrée (Louvain: Peeters, forthcoming).
- ". "Epicurus on the Value of Friendship (Sententia Vaticana 23)." Classical Philology 97 (2002): 68-80.
- ". "False Idles: The Politics of Quietude in Greek and Roman Antiquity." In A Companion to Greek and Roman Political Thought, ed. Ryan Balot (Oxford: Blackwell, forthcoming).
- ". "Hellenistic Cosmopolitanism." in A Companion to Ancient Philosophy, ed. Mary Louise Gill and Pierre Pellegrin (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2006), 549-558.
- ". "Justice and Compulsion for Plato's Philosopher-Rulers." Ancient Philosophy 20 (2000): 1-17.
- ". "Minding the Gap in Plato's Republic." Philosophical Studies 117 (2004): 275-302.
- ". "Plato on the Rule of Wisdom." in Spindel Conference 2004: Ancient Ethics and Politics, ed. Tim Roche (Southern Journal of Philosophy 43 s.v. [2005]), 84-96.
- ". "Politics and Society." in The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism, ed. James Warren (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).
- ". Stoic Cosmopolitanism. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming.
- ". "Wishing for Fortune, Choosing Activity: Aristotle on External Goods and Happiness." Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy 21 (2005): 57-81. To be fully reprinted in volume 22 (2006) because the editors went to press without circulating proofs and neglected to print the article's notes.
- Erskine, Andrew. The Hellenistic Stoa: Political Thought and Action. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990.
- Habicht, Christian. Athens from Alexander to Antony. trans. Deborah Lucas Schneider. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. Lectures on the History of Philosophy. trans. E.S Haldane and Frances H. Simson from the second edition of 1840-1844. 3 vols. London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1892-1896. reprinted Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995. first German edition 1833-1836.
- Joly, Robert. "Le Thème Philosophique des Genres de Vie dans l'Antiquité Classique." Mémoires de l'Académie Royale de Belgique 51,3 (1956): 7-201.

- Long, A.A. Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics. 2nd ed. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986.
- Long, A.A., and D.N. Sedley. The Hellenistic Philosophers. 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- MacIntyre, Alasdair. A Short History of Ethics. New York: Macmillan, 1966.
- Mewaldt, Johannes. "Das Weltbürgertum in der Antike." Die Antike 2 (1926): 177-189.
- O'Keefe, Timothy. "The Cyrenaics on Pleasure, Happiness, and Future-Concern." Phronesis 47 (2002): 395-416.
- Sinclair, T.A. A History of Greek Political Thought. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952.
- Warren, James. Epicurus and Democritean Ethics: An Archaeology of Ataraxia. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Zeller, Edouard. The Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics. trans. Oswald J. Reichel, from Die Philosophie der Griechen, 2nd ed. London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1870.
- . Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy. 13th ed. revised by Wilhelm Nestle. trans. L.R. Palmer. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1931. reprinted New York: Dover, 1980. Grundriss der Geschichte der Griechischen Philosophie first published, 1883.