A PUZZLE IN STOIC ETHICS

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

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

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

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

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

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

I

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

[2] Cf. Brad Inwood's similar conclusion, reached from a very different starting point: 'In no useful sense does Stoic moral theory tell the agent what is to be done in a concrete case' ('Rules and Reasoning in Stoic Ethics', in K. Ierodiakonou (ed.), *Topics in Stoic Philosophy* (Oxford, 1999), 95–127 at 125).

[3] *τὸ ὁμολογουμένως τῇ φύσει ζῆν*, D.L. 7. 87 (LS 63C). Quotations for which an 'LS' number is supplied are in the translations of Long and Sedley, sometimes lightly revised (A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* [LS] (2 vols.; Cambridge, 1987)). I have consistently translated *καθῆκον* as 'appropriate action' in place of LS's 'proper function'.

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nature' being added as a clarification by his successor Cleanthes.[4] The third scholarch, Chrysippus, elaborated further: the end is 'living in accordance with experience of what happens by nature'.[5]

These formulations are still very abstract, and it is no surprise that later Stoics continued to tinker with the definition of the *telos*. According to Diogenes of Babylon, head of the Stoic school in the second century BC, the *telos* was 'reasoning well in the selection [*ἐκλογῇ*] and disselection of the things in accordance with nature [*τῶν κατὰ φύσιν*]'.[6] His successor as scholarch, Antipater of Tarsus, claimed that it is 'to live continuously selecting [*ἐκλεγομένους*] the things in accordance with nature [*τὰ κατὰ φύσιν*] and disselecting things contrary to nature'; or, still more carefully but longwindedly, 'to do everything in one's power continuously and undeviatingly with a view to obtaining [*τυγχάνειν*] the predominating things in accordance with nature [*τῶν προηγουμένων κατὰ φύσιν*]'.[7] And likewise the roughly contemporary Archedemus, with a rather enigmatic addition: the *telos* is to live 'selecting [*ἐκλεγόμενον*] the greatest and most important things in accordance with nature [*τὰ κατὰ φύσιν μέγιστα καὶ κυριώτατα*], not being able to overcome them [*οὐχ οἷόν τε ὄντα ὑπερβαίνειν*]'.[8] That such formulae aim to elucidate a shared idea is confirmed by Cicero's readiness to combine them at *De finibus* 3. 31: 'the supreme good is to live applying one's knowledge

[4] Stob. ii. 75. 11–76. 6 (LS 63B). Stobaeus references are to volume, page, and line of the edition by Wachsmuth and Hense (Berlin, 1884; repr. Berlin, 1958).

[5] *ζῆν κατ' ἐμπειρίαν τῶν φύσει συμβαινόντων*, Stob. ii. 76. 6–8 (LS 63B).

[6] Stob. ii. 76. 9–10 (LS 58K). Inwood has suggested that Chrysippus himself already offered a fuller formulation of the *telos* incorporating 'selection' (*Ethics and Human Action in Earlier Stoicism* [*Ethics*] (Oxford, 1985), 203, cf. 317 n. 98). However, the evidence for this, including Cic. *Fin*. 3. 31, can equally well be read as running together several compatible formulations.

[7] Stob. ii. 76. 11–15 (LS 58K). On the somewhat mysterious concept of the 'predominating' (*προηγούμενον*) cf. S.E. *M*. 11. 48 and Stob. ii. 84. 24–85. 1 and (citing Hierocles) iv. 502. 10–13. Stobaeus ii. 84. 24–85. 1 suggests that the Stoics used *προηγούμενον* to provide a quasi-etymological explanation of the 'preferred' (*προηγμένον*, from *προάγω*) as what is supported by a 'predominating' reason, i.e., one which is leading or principled, or takes precedence (*κατὰ προηγούμενον λόγον*, actually from *προηγέομαι*, though no ancient etymologizer would be bothered by that). The term is also reasonably frequent in Epictetus, but his usage does little to clarify its meaning (1. 20. 14; 2. 5. 4; 2. 8. 8; 3. 7. 6, 24–6; 3. 22. 76).

[8] Clem. *Strom*. 2. 21 (=*SVF* iii. 21 Archedemus). Whether 'overcome' is really the right translation of *ὑπερβαίνειν* here, and what Archedemus might mean by it, are unclear to me. Archedemus is more frequently cited as claiming that the *telos* consists in fulfilling all the appropriate actions (D.L. 7. 88; Stob. ii. 76. 10–11). Presumably the two formulations are somehow equivalent: how this could be so is another way of putting the problem which this paper attempts to set forth.

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of the natural order, selecting what accords with nature [*seligentem quae secundum naturam . . . sint*], and rejecting what is contrary. This is what it is to live consistently and harmoniously with nature.'[9]

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

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

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

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

[11] Cf. also *SVF* iii. 190–6 on selection. Of course, given the Stoic identification of God, fate, and the cosmic order, properly speaking *whatever happens* is 'in accordance with nature' (cf. e.g. Plut. *Stoic. repugn.* 1050B–D, quoting Chrysippus, and cf. Chrysippus ap. Epict. 2. 6. 9–10). But the fact that the good Stoic endorses whatever fate sends, once it has been sent, does not in itself tell us (or him) anything very useful about how to deliberate. For *τὰ κατὰ φύσιν* to pick out any determinate class of options, and play a meaningful role in deliberation, it *must* have a special sense—a sense I take to be marked in these contexts by its association with 'selection' (*ἐκλογή*).

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dance with nature are to-be-taken, and all things contrary to nature are not-to-be-taken' (Stob. ii. 82. 20–1 (LS 58C)).

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

Various confusions and refinements apart,[13] the position so far

[12] I will have little to say in this paper about impulses and impressions. One would expect these concepts to be the crucial framework for Stoic thinking about deliberation: however, so far as I can see, all the very different models of deliberation I consider in this paper are compatible with what we know about the Stoic theory of action.

[13] I cannot here enter into all of these complications, but will note a few; cf. the discussion of A. F. Bonhöffer, *The Ethics of the Stoic Epictetus* [*Epictetus*], trans. W. Stephens (New York, 1996; first pub., Stuttgart, 1894, cited by original pagination), 172–7).

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

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seems to be something close to a set of equations. Things in accordance with nature are things which have value, and things which have value (or at any rate sufficient value) are preferred indifferents, to be selected or taken; things contrary to nature have disvalue, and things which have disvalue are dispreferred indifferents, which should be disselected or rejected. But these equations are uninformative until we have the answers to two questions: (1) what things *are* in accordance with nature, valuable and preferred? and (2) what is the theoretical *point* of these categories—or, to put it another way, why *should* we select and disselect these things? Fortunately our texts offer quite explicit, if not exhaustive, answers to both ques-

Stob. ii. 84. 4–13 Diogenes of Babylon seems to claim that the 'contribution' sense appropriately applies to preferred indifferents; LS read Stobaeus' prior distinctions accordingly, arguing that the same thing (e.g. health) might have value in all three senses, and that 'health is something valuable *per se*' (ii. 351). On that reading, the distinction between this 'contribution' value and 'selective' value is perhaps between preferability in general, at the level of types, and the preferability of a token, all things considered, in a particular 'selective' context (cf. (2) following).)

(2) Several passages indicate that not *all* indifferents with value count as preferred: only some have *sufficient* value to qualify (S.E. *PH* 3. 191; *M.* 11. 62; Stob. ii. 80. 14–21, ii. 84. 18–22; Cic. *Fin.* 3. 51, cf. LS ii. 352). It is odd that no text explains what the other, mysteriously underweight, indifferents might be. I would suggest that they are either (*a*) tokens of the usual preferred indifferents in too small a quantity to be rationally motivating (wealth is preferred, but the Sage need not pick up a penny from the pavement); or (*b*) tokens of the usual preferred indifferents which fail to be rationally preferable in some given situation, because they are outweighed by other more valuable ones. In the latter case, this distinction, too, simply gestures, clumsily, towards the distinction already noted under (1), between what has value and is 'preferred' in the weak sense of being a generally preferred type (or being a token of such a type), and what turns out to be 'preferred' in the stronger sense of being the correct object of selection in a particular situation.

(3) Some texts distinguish between what is preferred for its own sake (δι' αὑτά), what is preferred for the sake of something else, and what is both (D.L. 7. 107; Cic. *Fin.* 3. 56; cf. Stob. ii. 82. 21–83. 9). Little seems to hang on this: *per se* preferability should not be confused with the way in which one might, incorrectly, view the preferred indifferents as *desirable* for their own sake. Since the indifferents are not even a means to the end of virtue, the correct attitude is not to desire them at all, but simply to take or select them with detachment, for their own sake or for the sake of other indifferents as the case may be.

(4) Several texts speak of 'primary' things in accordance with nature, but they seem to pick out rather different things, and do not add up to a clear picture of how these are related to 'things in accordance with nature' *simpliciter* (*prima* or *principia naturae*, Cic. *Fin.* 3. 17–23; τὰ πρῶτα κατὰ φύσιν, Stob. ii. 80. 6–8, ii. 82. 11–12; Plut. *Comm. not.* 1071 A ff.; Galen, *Plac. Hipp. et Plat.* 5. 6. 10–14). The principal distinction between what is 'primary' and what is not, I would suggest, is both logical (overlapping with the 'for its own sake'/'for the sake of something else' distinction) and chronological. Wealth is preferred because we learn that it can help us to obtain other indifferents, and our impulse towards it is therefore subsequent to our impulse towards the latter (cf. LS i. 357).

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tions. Diogenes Laertius gives several lists of preferred and dispreferred indifferents: 'life, health, pleasure, beauty, strength, wealth, reputation, noble birth, and their opposites, death, disease, pain, ugliness, weakness, poverty, low repute, ignoble birth, and the like' (D.L. 7. 102 (LS 58A)). Or, according to another of Diogenes' lists, 'among things of the soul, natural ability, skill, [moral] progress and similar things; among bodily things life, health, strength, good condition, soundness, beauty and the like; among external things wealth, reputation, noble birth and similar things' are all preferred; and the dispreferred indifferents are their opposites (7. 106).[14]

The rationale for these classifications goes back to Plato. At *Euthydemus* 278 E–281 E Socrates argues that 'goods' like wealth, health, beauty, noble birth, power, honour, and even useful psychological qualities such as self-control can be used well or badly. When used well they are beneficial to their possessor, but when used badly they are harmful; and the cause of right use is knowledge or wisdom. He concludes that these 'goods' are not good in themselves or by nature, but only if put to use by wisdom; if ignorance controls them, they are greater evils than their opposites. Only wisdom is good in itself, and ignorance bad; and so the key to happiness is the possession of wisdom. Essentially the same argument is attributed to the Stoics by Diogenes Laertius. Only what *reliably* benefits or harms us is good or bad respectively: 'For just as heating, not chilling, is the peculiar characteristic of what is hot, so too benefiting, not harming, is the peculiar characteristic of what is good. But wealth and health no more do benefit than they harm. Therefore wealth and health are not something good' (D.L. 7. 103 (LS 58A)).[15]

But why, then, should some indifferents count as 'preferred'? The designation does not simply express the claim that the preferred and dispreferred indifferents standardly *do* arouse our impulses of pursuit and avoidance. A preferred indifferent is one which it is *rational* for us to prefer; and what makes it rational is the norma-

[14] Trans. B. Inwood and L. Gerson, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, 2nd edn. (Indianapolis, 1997). Similar enumerations are given in other sources: according to Stobaeus, the preferred indifferents include 'health, strength, well-functioning sense organs, and the like' (ii. 79. 20–80. 1 (LS 58C)).

[15] Hence also, in some texts, an ancillary schema of terminological distinctions: the preferred and dispreferred indifferents provide not 'benefits' (*emolumenta*) and 'harms' (*detrimenta*), but 'advantages' (*commoda*) and 'disadvantages' (*incommoda*) respectively (Cic. *Fin.* 3. 69).

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

There is also a second line of reasoning behind the attribution of value to the indifferents. This can best be seen by considering the challenge posed to Stoic orthodoxy by the views of Aristo of Chios. Aristo notoriously rejected the categories 'preferred' and 'dispreferred' and insisted that everything between virtue and vice was absolutely indifferent—and indeed that the *telos* consisted precisely in indifference to everything except virtue and vice (S.E. *M.* 11. 64–7; D.L. 7. 160; Cic. *Fin.* 3. 50). The correct interpretation of Aristo's position is a matter of some controversy, but two of his arguments are worth noting here. One is that under special circumstances, it is rational to disprefer the 'preferred', and vice versa. If a tyrant is drafting all healthy men into his army, where they can expect to be killed, while the sick are exempt, the wise man will chose sickness over health (S.E. *M.* 11. 64–7).

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

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

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

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

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thodox theory: 'Just as in writing people's names we put different letters first at different times, adapting them to the different circumstances . . . so too in the things which are between virtue and vice no natural priority for some over others arises but a priority which is based rather on circumstances' (S.E. *M.* 11. 67 (LS 58F)). How the Sage would determine what circumstances require seems to have been left obscure by Aristo; and the Stoics charged that there could be *no* rational basis for action if everything other than virtue and vice were absolutely indifferent. Cicero thus claims that on Aristo's view, 'the whole of life would be thrown into chaos . . . Wisdom would have no role or function, since there would be no difference whatsoever between any of the things that pertain to the conduct of life, and so no method of choosing could properly be applied' (*Fin.* 3. 50).

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

Thus the intermediate standing of the 'indifferents' is fixed by powerful convergent pressures within Stoicism. On the one side is the Platonic argument that such things cannot be genuinely good or bad—an argument not just passively inherited from Plato, but necessary to the central Stoic project (shared with their Epicurean rivals) of showing that happiness is always within our power. On the other are two powerful reasons to ascribe genuine value to the indifferents: first, the need to endorse the natural drives and dispositions granted to us by providence; and second, the need to stop short of the arguably irrationalist position reached by Aristo. Hence the delicate and terminologically laborious system of balances and qualifications which make up the Stoic account of the indifferents. On the one hand, indifferents may be genuinely and objectively natural, valuable, preferred and selected; on the other, they *cannot* be good, beneficial, constitutive of happiness, or legitimate objects of choice and desire.[19]

situation, neither should they be called 'preferred' when they are not *preferable* in every situation.

[19] To note in passing another important aspect of the indifferents' role, the mis-

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In most of our sources, the contrast between genuine goods and the indifferents typically appears as an ethical topic in its own right. But the indifferents also play a crucial role in Stoic accounts of human maturation and moral development. The human infant, like other animals, naturally seeks what will preserve it, and this forms the necessary starting point for its performance of 'appropriate actions' (*καθήκοντα*). In the important developmental account of *De finibus* 3, Cicero explains:

> With this established, the initial 'appropriate action' [*officium*] (this is what I call the Greek *καθῆκον*) is to preserve oneself in one's natural constitution. The next is to take what is in accordance with nature and reject its opposite. Once this method of selection (and likewise rejection) has been discovered, selection then goes hand in hand with appropriate action. Then such selection becomes continuous and, finally, stable and in agreement with nature. (*Fin.* 3. 20)

This might suggest that the 'things in accordance with nature' are merely a starting point, to be transcended once our practice of appropriate actions has got off the ground. And indeed, our attitude to the indifferents is, Cicero explains, transformed when we recognize the infinitely greater beauty and importance of rational and appropriate action itself, in something approaching a moment of conversion or transcendent insight (*Fin.* 3. 21–3): when one 'sees an order and as it were concordance in the things which one ought to do, one then values that concordance much more highly than those first objects of affection' (3. 21). This concordance or consistency (Cicero notes the Stoic use of the Greek term *ὁμολογία*, reminiscent of Zeno's *telos* formula) is the true location of the human good; it is 'the only thing to be sought in virtue of its own power and worth, whereas none of the primary objects of nature is to be sought on its own account' (ibid.).

But this transformation, and the Stoic agent's new commitment to the supreme importance of rational action, does not have the implications we might assume. Cicero insists vehemently that an agent who has fully grasped the indifference of the natural 'starting points' will continue to select them. Nor is their role reduced to an instrumental one, as a means to the now recognized real good,

take of taking them to be genuinely good or bad is the hallmark of those pathological states, the emotions (*πάθη*). This helps to explain why it is worthwhile to put something like 'noble birth' in the list of indifferents (D.L. 7. 106): I can hardly pursue it, but I might be mistakenly pained at not having it, envious of those who do, etc.

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

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

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

[20] *Pace* G. Lesses, 'Virtue and the Goods of Fortune in Stoic Moral Theory', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 7 (1989), 95–128. An instrumental role (in any normal sense) for the preferred indifferents would actually give them a much closer connection to the good of virtue than is compatible with the profound separation between the two on which both the Stoics and their critics insist. 'In any normal sense', because the 'hierarchical' relation I elaborate later in this section, using the model of motivations in a game, could (rather misleadingly) be described as making the selection of goods (though not the goods themselves) a means to a higher end.

[21] Does Cicero (or his source) simply *assume* that whatever is the 'primary' object of our impulses in the temporal sense must also be *logically* primary, by forming the raw material of all deliberation? The assumption (for which cf. Galen, *Plac. Hipp. et Plat.* 5. 6. 10–14; Cic. *Fin.* 5. 17–20) is obviously questionable. But it can perhaps be explained by the Stoic commitment to preserving continuity with our natural tendencies as seamlessly as the Epicurean could claim to do (cf. sect. VI).

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

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

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

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

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

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

> Of course I will [select preferred indifferents]. Not because they are good, but because they are in accordance with nature, and because they will be taken on the basis of my good judgement. 'What, then, will be good in them?' Just this—being well selected. For when I put on the right sort of clothes, or walk as I should, or dine as I should, neither the dining nor the walking nor the clothes are good, but the intention I display in them by preserving a measure, in each thing, which conforms to reason. . . . So it is not elegant clothes which are a good in themselves, but the selection of elegant clothes, since the good is not in the thing but in the quality of the selection. (*Ep.* 92. 11–12 (LS 64J))

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

As a starting point, consider the Stoic claim that the virtues are possessed and exercised as a unity, collectively constituting a craft or art (*technē*) of living. The Stoics seek to clarify aspects of that craft by way of analogies with various other skills—acting and dancing, navigation and medicine, dice-playing and archery. The last of these is the most suggestive here: the Stoic account of the relation of the indifferents to the *telos* is supported by comparison with an archer whose goal is not to hit the target (a sudden gust of wind might make that impossible, even if he executes the shot impeccably), though all his efforts are directed towards that reference point, but simply the correct exercise of his craft.[25] Cicero elaborates:

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

[25] Cf. also Plut. *Comm. not.* 1071 B–C, 1072 E–F; LS i. 406–10; A. A. Long, 'Carneades and the Stoic *Telos*', *Phronesis*, 12 (1967), 59–90.

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

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

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

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even experience them, being simply motivated by a kind of blind competitiveness; but it seems natural to think of that as a starting point to be transformed by experience and reflection.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

II

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

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

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

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

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

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

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some assumptions left lurking in the background of the account I gave in Section I—and, so far as I can see, lurking in the background of most expositions of Stoicism, ancient and modern alike. To begin with, recall Aristo's first argument, based on the case of the person who rationally prefers sickness to being drafted and killed. As I noted, the Stoic response is that in particular cases we must consider 'preferred' and 'dispreferred' indifferents as tokens, not types, and allow that some particular token of a preferred type may be dispreferred under special circumstances and vice versa.[30] In other words, some indifferents may *outweigh* others: in the case in question, the overall outcome ill-health-and-continued-life is clearly preferable to the outcome good-health-and (or, more precisely, up until) early-death. And the need to weigh one package of indifferents against another must be a pervasive, even a universal, feature of deliberation. It is difficult to think of prospective actions in which only a single indifferent is involved: every time the Sage buys lunch, he must judge that the advantage to his health in doing so outweighs the diminution of his wealth. Selections are necessarily 'all things considered': what is rationally preferred or dispreferred can only be assessed in context. Hence the Stoic doctrine of appropriate actions which depend on circumstances: under special circumstances it may be appropriate to mutilate oneself or give away one's fortune (D.L. 7. 109). Hence too Cicero's claim that the Sage's decision to commit suicide will depend on the balance of preferred and dispreferred indifferents in his life (*Fin*. 3. 60).

Such reasoning implies the adoption of a calculus of value, enabling us to weigh the indifferents which may figure in any given deliberation. That must be at least one respect in which correct selection requires 'reasoning well' (εὐλογιστεῖν), as per Diogenes' *telos* formula: it is at least in part because he has mastered this calculus, and can correctly reckon all the features of a complex situation against each other, that the Sage's selections are perfectly rational. How this calculus might work is left obscure by our sources: but that all preferred indifferents have 'value' (ἀξία) and all dispreferred indifferents 'disvalue' (ἀπαξία) confirms the existence of a common denominator in terms of which various packages of indifferents may be compared. (And clearly different amounts of value must accrue

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

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

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

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

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

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

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meal evidence that we are to understand selection as the selection of indifferents for the agent himself. (1) Though 'selection' (*ἐκλογή*) and cognates are rather colourless terms, the Stoics also talk about the preferred indifferents as 'to-be-taken' (*λητπτόν*, from *λαμβάνω* 'take'), which strongly suggests getting something into one's own grasp; and Antipater seems to paraphrase 'selection' by saying that we should 'do everything to obtain [*τυγχάνειν*]' the things in accordance with nature. (2) The opponents of the Stoics argue that it is absurd to hold that the end consists in 'selection' rather than in the actual obtaining of what is selected; and the Stoic defences of their conception of the *telos* accept both the relevance of the selecting/obtaining contrast and, it seems, the understanding that this is roughly the contrast between impulse and successful outcome.[33] (3) In the seminal Platonic arguments at *Meno* 87 D–89 A and *Euthydemus* 278 E–281 E, it is clearly an agent's own possession of the 'goods' which is in question (note *Meno* 77 C 7–8, where Socrates stipulates that in these contexts 'desire' means 'desire to secure for oneself'). (4) Recall Aristo's argument that health should not be deemed 'preferred': as the Stoics are expected to agree, I should weigh *my* health against *my* life in selecting sickness over the draft. (5) When the theory of the indifferents is put to work in the developmental exposition of *De finibus* 3, the initial appropriate actions which they ground are presented as agent-relative selections, and this is never revisited or revised. Indeed, Cicero says, 'since all people by nature love themselves . . . the foolish no less than the wise will adopt what is in accordance with nature and reject what is contrary' (3. 59). (6) Accordingly, as already noted, agent-relativity is also assumed in the *De finibus* account of when suicide is reasonable (3. 60–1).

These clues add up, I believe, to good prima facie grounds for us to take 'selection' as an impulse to get the object selected into

is bound to involve. In that case, the *telos* formula of Diogenes, for instance, would use the language of 'selection' to emphasize that the Sage's action will involve some redistribution, so to speak, of items in the world which are themselves indifferent to happiness, while what is *not* indifferent is the 'reasoning well' with which that redistribution (whatever shape it may take) is performed. However, it is hard to make sense of the distinction between selection and disselection on this reading; and the evidence above for an agent-relative understanding of 'selection' seems to me to rule it out.

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

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

(1) *Some equations*. For deliberative purposes, the 'things in accordance with nature' are the bearers of (sufficient) 'value', i.e. the preferred indifferents; the 'things contrary to nature' are the bearers of (sufficient) 'disvalue', i.e. the dispreferred indifferents.
(2) *Exhaustiveness*. All actions can be described as selections of indifferents.
(3) *Deliberative sufficiency*. Deliberation incorporates only considerations about indifferents *qua* indifferents, i.e. as bearers of value and disvalue.
(4) *Maximization*. A correct deliberation is one which maximizes (reasonably expected) value.
(5) *Agent-relativity*. Selection is selection for oneself, an impulse to get what is selected into one's own grasp: so (4) should be understood in terms of maximization *for the agent*.

I shall call (1)–(5) the Maximization Model of Stoic deliberation. On this model, the Stoic's deliberative task in any situation is to determine which selection, of those open to him, will provide him with as much overall value as possible. His deliberations will thus be governed by a sort of ersatz egoistic consequentialism—ersatz, because of course his aim in selection is to maximize that rather mysterious entity 'value' rather than happiness or anything which directly contributes to it.

This sounds alarmingly unlike the views we usually associate with Stoicism, and it is hard not to suspect that something has gone badly wrong. The starkest difficulty is of course that, like the vaguer account I outlined in Section I, the Maximization Model cannot account for the results the Stoics expect deliberation to reach: a wide range of deliberative procedures could ground Regulus' heroic decisions, but this is not one of them.[34] The difficulty is to see precisely where the Maximization Model goes off the rails. As I have tried to show, each of its constitutive propositions is decently

[34] The problem is not that the Maximization Model is in a general way 'too egoistic' to be authentically Stoic—Cicero insists that as a right action, Regulus' action was beneficial, i.e. happiness-promoting, to himself—but more precisely, that such heroic actions cannot be parsed as agent-relative *maximizations of value*.

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grounded in the texts; and there is nothing structurally unstable in the relation it asserts between the indifferents and the end. If Maximization none the less cannot be the right model of Stoic deliberation, what is?

III

Here and in the following two sections I consider some alternative interpretations of 'selection', ones more easily made compatible with heroic or philanthropic action. The simplest solution leaves intact the structural features of the Maximization Model, including propositions (1)–(5) listed above, and simply reconsiders the scope of the preferred and dispreferred indifferents. Some of the Stoics themselves seem to have been tempted by this solution. Though scholars have not made much of it, 'moral progress' itself, προκοπή, appears as a preferred indifferent in several of our lists (Stob. ii. 81. 1; D.L. 7. 106–7). To endorse Regulan behaviour we need only stipulate that any amount of progress has so great a value as to outweigh any other indifferents; so the Stoic deliberative calculus will always give the morally 'right' sort of results.

However, this is clearly the wrong *kind* of solution. Moral progress cannot really figure as a ground-level consideration in deliberation: for we progress morally by performing appropriate actions, and which action would be appropriate is what deliberation seeks to find out. Worse, moral progress is no longer available to the Sage: so it could not figure in *his* deliberations as preferred (nor could the virtue which replaces it, since this is a genuine good), with the absurd result that his deliberations would be more dominated by the other preferred indifferents, such as wealth. Finally, moral progress cannot really have the same kind of normative role as health and wealth, for it has a different relation to the genuine good of virtue. It is perhaps not quite right to say that progress is a means to virtue, but we can at least say that (for human beings) it is a precondition for becoming virtuous; not so the indifferents.[35]

[35] Some other ways we might try to 'moralize' the list of the preferred indifferents: (1) Cicero reports that some Stoics took reputation to be preferred, for its own sake; this would affect a promisingly wide range of deliberations, but Cicero emphasizes that it is not the original or (in his view) correct Stoic position (*Fin.* 3. 57). (2) Our sources often describe at least some appropriate actions as 'intermediate' or 'middle' (μέσον, Stob. ii. 86. 2; Plut. *Stoic. repugn.* 1037 E ff.; *medium*, Cic. *Fin.* 3.

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

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

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

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

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

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

(5′) *Agent-neutrality*. Different selections can be made on behalf of different interests, and in so far as I have made moral progress, I select what maximizes value *impartially*.

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

So it is no surprise that Smith's model seems to be at work in a number of recent interpretations. As Julia Annas puts it, 'a person who has developed towards virtue and extended the circles of social *oikeiōsis* will realize that from the moral viewpoint she has

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

IV

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

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

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

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locutions 'to-be-taken' and 'to-be-selected' express 'the attitude a Stoic should adopt towards *AN* things [things in accordance with nature] which happen to be available . . . and which he can take or select without compromising his moral principles' (LS i. 358).[40] Likewise Inwood: 'An adult continues to pursue those things which are preferred, but always in such a way that in case of a conflict with his pursuit of the good the impulse to the good will override his selection of the preferred thing' (*Ethics*, 210).[41]

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

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

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

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

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

V

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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'Adam Smith' one. But formally it is more like the first strategy I considered, of treating moral progress itself as a preferred indifferent: like 'value' there, 'accordance-with-nature' here is used to provide a common denominator which will, it is hoped, always give the 'right' deliberative result.

The Degrees of Nature model is proposed with reasonable clarity by Cicero in *De officiis* 3:

> Indeed, when the Stoics say that the greatest good is to live agreeably with nature, this means, in my view, the following: always to concur with virtue; and as for other things that are in accordance with nature, to choose them if they do not conflict with virtue. (*Off*. 3. 13)

In spirit, this sounds rather like the Dualist Model, but it differs crucially in the reference to *other* things (*cetera*) in accordance with nature; for this implies that action which 'concurs' with virtue is *itself* in accordance with nature in the same way as, albeit to a greater degree than, other potential objects of selection. Thus Cicero also claims that anyone who wants to live in accordance with nature 'will never act so as to seek what is another's, nor to appropriate for himself something that he has taken from someone else. For loftiness and greatness of spirit, and indeed, friendliness, justice, and liberality, are *far more in accordance with nature* than pleasure, than life, than riches' (3. 23–4, my emphasis). Since we are by nature social and co-operative beings, nothing can be more contrary to nature for us than to commit injustice (3. 21, 26, 28, 35). We are not required to be relentlessly impartial: 'It is permitted to us—nature does not oppose it—that each man should prefer to secure for himself rather than for another anything connected with the necessities of life' (3. 22). However, we are forbidden to harm others in pursuing our own advantage, or to neglect the common good (3. 30).

This position, as I have so far presented it, seems to me clear and coherent; and it has many advantages as a model of Stoic deliberation. Above all, it solves the problem of how to endorse Regulan behaviour, and incorporate *oikeiōsis*-based considerations into deliberation, while upholding the orthodoxy of Diogenes and Antipater. However, there are several reasons to hesitate before taking the Degrees of Nature model as a generally happy solution to our puzzle. First, it is explicit here that Cicero does not speak with the weight of a well-attested Stoic tradition behind him. On the

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contrary, *De officiis* claims to be following Panaetius, and Cicero complains that Panaetius' uncompleted work left off at precisely the crucial point, on the question of how we are to deliberate when the apparently honourable and the apparently beneficial conflict (3. 7–11, 33–4). Hence the rather unnerving 'in my view' (*ut opinor*) at *Off*. 3. 13 above: Cicero here is largely on his own, working his way through problems on which the earlier tradition had not reached any clear verdict.

A second striking feature of Cicero's discussion is what seems to be, from the point of view of earlier Stoic doctrine, its considerable conceptual confusion. For Cicero seems to want the crucial concept of 'benefit' (*utilitas*) to mediate between moral and non-moral 'goods'. In fact, his vehement and repetitive identifications of the beneficial and the honourable seem intended to make two claims at once: only what is honourable is beneficial for me (in the strong sense of contributing to my happiness) and only what is generally beneficial (in the weak sense of promoting non-moral advantages) is honourable (3. 19, 33–4, 40). These claims are not incompatible; but Cicero seems to have lost sight of the fact that they are quite independent. Likewise Cicero's quotation of Antipater as saying, 'Your benefit is the common benefit, and conversely, the common benefit is yours' (*Off*. 3. 52). This is simply not true if 'benefit' is taken consistently in the weak sense, as the kind of advantage which an individual reaps from the possession of health or wealth; *nor* is it true if 'benefit' is consistently understood as the advantage which a Sage reaps from virtue, i.e. happiness. The use of the slogan can only be to conflate the two senses, the better to insist on the bonds between my happiness and the prosperity (as Smith put it) of my community.

Cicero's equivocation on the 'beneficial' is not just suggestive of conceptual confusion; it points to a fundamental problem with the Degrees of Nature model. That model is designed to ensure that considerations about the 'honourable' (what we would identify as 'moral' considerations) will always be decisive in the Stoic's deliberations, since to obey them is *more* in accordance with nature than anything else. So Cicero's ambiguous use of the 'beneficial' simply tracks 'accordance with nature', which is, on this model, the salient normative property for deliberation, and common both to the preferred indifferents and to appropriate actions (cf. *Off*. 3. 35). Now this conception of the relation between moral and non-

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moral 'goods' is not without its philosophical strengths, and is well attested in Hellenistic philosophy. Unfortunately, it is attested as the position of the *Peripatetics*. In *De finibus* 3–4 the battle-line between Stoicism and the Peripatetic–Academic position championed by Antiochus is drawn over this very question: whether the value of non-moral 'goods' is commensurable *at all* with the value of virtuous agency, so that the former can be seen as making some contribution, however small and easily outweighed, to the *telos*. And here Cicero, speaking for Antiochus, criticizes the Stoics for going to absurd lengths to preserve a merely terminological distinction between themselves and the Peripatetics. I argued in Section I that the *De finibus* 4 critique of Stoicism can be answered; but it hits the mark against the post-Panaetian Stoicism presented by Cicero himself in *De officiis* 3.[46] For if 'beneficial' and 'in accordance with nature' apply to the indifferents and to moral action alike, without any distinction except one of degree, then the hierarchical model of the game or craft, in which only the indifferents figure as first-order objects of pursuit, while moral considerations operate on a different order altogether, has been given up. It is indeed hard to see how the Stoic position can be held apart from the Peripatetic in the absence of that model; and so it is easy to see why Stoic orthodoxy never avowed this solution to our puzzle.[47]

[46] Cf. Cic. *Fin*. 4. 39: 'The inconsistency of the Stoics here causes me endless amazement. They determine that natural desire—what they call *hormē*—and appropriate action, and even virtue itself are all things that are in accordance with nature. Yet when they wish to arrive at the supreme good, they skip over everything else and leave us with two tasks instead of one—to 'adopt' [*sumamus*] some things, and 'seek' [*expetamus*] others, rather than including both of them under a single end.' Here Cicero, speaking for Antiochus, seems to describe the Stoics as including appropriate action and virtue among the 'things in accordance with nature': but his complaint is precisely that the Stoics none the less *refuse* to integrate them into deliberation, as the Degrees of Nature model would require. The complaint confirms that for the orthodox Stoa, the important conceptual task is precisely to hold apart the morally worthy and the merely preferable, insisting that no such comparisons of value can be made, no matter how reliably they favour virtue.

[47] The Stoics could perhaps avoid this collapse into the Peripatos by stipulating that only what in any situation is *most* in accordance with nature is genuinely in accordance with nature at all. The accordance-with-nature of any alternative option is only prima facie: given that theft is unjust, the consideration that it would increase my wealth is not just outweighed but rendered null and void. However, it is notable that even Cicero does not claim this, instead relying on the comparative language ('more in accordance with nature') I cited earlier in this section; and it would distort the concept of 'accordance with nature' almost out of recognition.

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VI

So how does a practising Stoic decide what to do? All of the models I have considered here have their advantages: and so long as we do not bother to distinguish them clearly, it is easy to suppose that together they give us a reasonably good picture of how Stoic deliberation should proceed. But the models are not in fact compatible. Either every action is also a 'selection' or it is not; either the Sage selects the indifferents for himself or he does so in some more agent-neutral way; either motivations to select indifferents are trumped by motivations different in kind or they are not; either the phrases 'preferred indifferents' and 'things according to nature', in contexts relating to selection, denote the same class of objects or they do not. Until we have answers to these questions, I for one have little sense of what it would mean to act as a Stoic; and I do not think that clear answers are to be found in our texts.

This unclarity can, I would speculatively suggest, be traced back to a fundamental conflict between two central strategies of Stoic ethics. One is the Stoics' deep commitment to arguing that what matters for happiness is not the possession of non-moral 'goods' but the correct exercise of reason and virtue in relation to them. This is the thesis which the Stoics take from Plato as the central building-block for their argument that happiness is always within our power. The other is the Stoic determination to give no quarter to their Epicurean rivals in the battle to appropriate 'nature' as an ethical norm, particularly by way of the inborn self-benefiting tendencies brought out in the 'cradle argument'.[48] The latter commits the Stoics to presenting their conception of virtuous agency as continuous with more obviously 'natural' behaviour, by depicting appropriate action as developing out of inborn drives and preferences. The better to do so, however, they make a fatal shift from Plato: for the most part,[49] they locate the task of rationality not in

[48] On which see J. Brunschwig, 'The Cradle Argument in Epicureanism and Stoicism', in M. Schofield and G. Striker (eds.), *The Norms of Nature* (Cambridge, 1986), 113–44.

[49] Of course, the Stoics do sometimes talk of the correct use of the indifferents (e.g. D.L. 7. 103–4; S.E. *M.* 11. 61; Epict. 2. 5–6 *passim*), and this may well be the way to understand Chrysippus' talk of the 'material of virtue' (*ὕλην τῆς ἀρετῆς*, Plut. *Comm. not.* 1069 E, cf. 1069 D and 1069 F). But the relation of use to selection is never clearly stated, and it is the latter which comes to be the more prominent, above all in the *telos* formulae.

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the correct *use* of the indifferents but in their correct *selection*—in our pursuing with insight objects continuous with those pursued spontaneously by the infant.

As I argued in Section I, the Stoics have an adequate defence against the standard charge that the resulting role assigned to the indifferents is unstable or incoherent. But this charge does land in the vicinity of a real, and indeed insoluble, problem. The game model I outlined in Section I makes good sense of the side of Stoicism engineered to compete with Epicurean naturalism, and shows how this could in principle be reconciled with a Platonic detachment from non-moral goods. For it shows how my 'external' or higher-order reasons for acting might become increasingly rich and authoritative while being non-revisionist in relation to action: my expanded insights into the ends served by a game do not revise the goals I pursue *within* it. The problem is that in the ethical case, the Platonic insight into the indifference of the non-moral goods surely *does* lead to their playing a radically different role in my life from the one they played before: and the discontinuity becomes very stark when we look at how the advanced Stoic is actually expected to behave. In practice, the serious adoption of Stoic higher-order ends must revise how I play the game of 'selection': a Regulus or Cato is no longer keeping score like everyone else.

A closing suggestion. If we think of other ethical systems which, like Stoicism, have attracted sophisticated advocates and practitioners over a number of generations, it is clear that the indeterminacy of Stoicism is far from exceptional. How, after all, does a utilitarian deliberate? There are almost as many answers as utilitarians, and with them comes a corresponding range of answers to the substantive question of how a utilitarian should act—so much so that 'utilitarianism' has really come to name a whole genus of philosophical positions. Hellenistic philosophical systems, with their revered founders, scholarchs, and other institutional pressures towards orthodoxy, are sociologically very different creatures from modern ones.[50] So where a modern philosophical movement fragments into theoretical diversity, we can expect the ancient one to be held together by a kind of indeterminacy—what we might call *constructive ambiguity*. In the present case, the sheer complexity of Stoicism, with its tectonic plates of doctrine engineered in response to dif-

[50] Cf. D. N. Sedley, 'Philosophical Allegiance in the Greco-Roman World', in M. Griffin and J. Barnes (eds.), *Philosophia Togata* (Oxford, 1989), 97–119.

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ferent problems and traditions, serves to give it the practical versatility and breadth of appeal which can belong to modern doctrines only at the generic level. There is a Stoicism to help you wear elegant clothes and a Stoicism to help you give up the life-raft: best of all, you need never choose between them.

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