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Colloquium 1

Physics as a Virtue

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The Stoics say that there are many virtues, although each virtue entails all the others; sometimes they give lists of what these virtues are, or rather of the generic virtues that include all specific virtuous dispositions. Sometimes they give the conventional list, "prudence, temperance, courage, justice" (Stobaeus II, 60 Wachsmuth-Hense); but two sources (Diogenes Laertius VII, 92 and the prologue to the pseudo-Plutarchan *Placita*) say the Stoics think there are three virtues, logic, physics, and ethics; and Cicero *De Finibus* III, 72-3 confirms that the Stoics list dialectic and physics as virtues, alongside the familiar moral virtues. It seems strange to us to count physics as a virtue. The Stoics, like the Platonic Socrates, thought that virtues were arts or sciences;¹ this may seem strange already, but we can understand it by saying that whoever knows the good will desire it and choose it, so that knowledge of the good will be a virtue and will motivate action. This may explain why *some* knowledge is a virtue, but it will not explain why *physics* is a virtue, since physics is not a knowledge of the good (and no ancient philosopher said it was). Nor are the Stoics using the word "virtue" so

¹ According to Stobaeus (II, 58) not *all* virtues are arts or sciences; but the traditional four virtues, *φρόνησις* and courage and temperance and justice, all are. The Stoics distinguish the broad class of arts from the narrower class of sciences (which only the sage can have), but all of these virtues are sciences as well as arts. An art or science is always a state of the soul (more exactly, it is the ruling part of the soul disposed in a certain way); the Stoics (unlike the Platonists, with their very different ontology), never consider a science "objectively" as a collection of theorems apart from a knower (sciences are *ἐπιστὰς*, while theorems are *ἀκρόασις*). I abbreviate DL = Diogenes Laertius, AM = Sextus *Adversus Mathematicos*, SVF = *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* (ed. von Arnim), DND = Cicero *De Natura Deorum*, TD = Cicero *Tusculanae Disputationibus*, DSR = Plutarch *De Stoicorum Repugnantiis*, DCN = Plutarch *De Commotionibus Notitiis adversus Stoicos*, PHP = Galen *De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*, DG = *Doxographi Graeci* (ed. Diels).

loosely that any excellence, including the theoretical sciences, would be a virtue: on the contrary, "some arts are theoretical but not practical, like geometry and astronomy; some are practical but not theoretical, like carpentry and metalworking and other so-called banalistic arts; but virtue is *both* theoretical and practical" (SVF III, 202 [Philo]). So if physics is a virtue it must be somehow a practical art, capable of motivating action, even though it is not a knowledge of the good.

In this paper I will try to show how the Stoics were led to say that physics was a virtue, and I will do my best to make this thesis intelligible. Explaining this thesis will lead me into a great deal of Stoic philosophy, and explaining it more fully would lead me into even more; I would like to suggest that reflection on this problem was in fact one major source of Stoic philosophy. For the conception of physics as a virtue is not simply a paradoxical corollary of Stoicism: it is presupposed in the most basic theses of the Stoic school. This is clear if we think about the *τέλος*-formulae ascribed to the successive heads of the school. Zeno said that the goal of human life was to live *ὁμολογούμεως*, consistently; Cleanthes, not disagreeing but supplementing the formula, said that the goal was to live *ὁμολογούμεως τῆ φύσει*, consistently with nature (once the longer formula is ascribed to Zeno himself); and Chrysippus, explaining Cleanthes' meaning, said that the goal was to live *κατ' ἐμπειρίαν τῶν φύσει συμβαίνουστων*, in accordance with experience of what happens by nature, where this *ἐμπειρία* can only be the science of physics (Stobaeus II, 75-6, cp. DL VII, 87, *De Finibus* IV, 14).

Reflection on these *τέλος*-formulae will show us how central the conception of physics as a virtue was to Stoic ethics. Since living *ὁμολογούμεως τῆ φύσει* is the same as living *κατ' ἐμπειρίαν τῶν φύσει συμβαίνουστων*, it is something only rational beings can do, and so it must mean more than just living "naturally": Gisela Striker paraphrases it as "consciously adapting one's life to the order of universal nature" (Striker 1986, 187). Striker calls this Stoic conception of the goal of human life "a rather strange suggestion, far removed from the traditional competitors virtue, pleasure, or fame" (Striker 1991, 5); but a little reflection shows that it is a specification of, and an attempt to resolve problems in, the Platonic and Aristotelian conception of the *τέλος* as a life according to virtue. Living *ὁμολογούμεως τῆ φύσει* is a special way of living *ὁμολογούμεως*, consistently, as opposed to *μαχόμεως*, inconsistently; and living *ὁμολογούμεως* will be the same as living according to virtue, since the Stoics define virtue as *διάθεσις*

ὁμολογούμενη (DL VII, 89), a consistent disposition. We can best understand this Stoic definition of virtue by thinking of virtue as an art that makes for happiness, or for living well [*εὐδαιμονεῖν, εὖ ζῆν, εὖ πράττειν*]. Any art leads me to act consistently in some particular domain of life, and thus to perform some particular activity well, when without the art I might have done it, but not well. To take a Stoic example, both the doctor and the layman produce health: the doctor's art does not give him a power to produce some entirely new effect, but merely teaches him to marshal his ordinary powers of perception and action, so that he produces health consistently and methodically, where the layman does it only by chance (AM XI, 200-209). Virtue, as an art of living, would be a disposition that leads me to act consistently, not just in a particular domain of life, but in life as a whole, so that, as the doctor *heals* well, I will *live* well.² The Stoics underline that living happily is just living according to such a consistent disposition, when they define happiness as a consistency of one's whole life [*ὁμολογία παντός τοῦ βίου*, DL VII, 89], or as an unobstructed flow of life [*εὐπορία τοῦ βίου*].

It is not obvious that there is such an art of living, or that we are able to live consistently (beyond making mere fragments of our lives consistent): Sextus call this "a pious wish."³ So if we believe that living happily is living according to some virtue, we will want to go further and specify *what* virtue, preferably in terms that show that such a virtue exists and show how humans can acquire it, if we stick to the original Socratic faith that virtues are sciences, we will want to specify the virtue by saying what it is a science of. When the Stoics say that living happily is not just living *ὁμολογούμεως* or according to virtue, but living *ὁμολογούμεως τῆ φύσει*, they are saying what virtue this is: it is physics, the science of what happens by nature.

This Stoic position may seem less strange if we compare the argument of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle has argued in Book I that happiness is the exercise of virtue in a complete life, but he must still investigate what virtue this is; it turns out that there are two different

² The Stoics say not merely that virtue is an art of living, but also with special emphasis that it is an art (or a disposition) concerning the *whole* of life: so Stobaeus in defining virtue at II, 60, and again at II, 66-7, and Philo at SVF III, 202.

³ "Εὐχὴ," AM XI, 208; the disappointment of this hope is crucial to Sextus' account of the motivation for scepticism, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* I, 25-30.

ways of living well, corresponding to two kinds of virtues. The second-best life is a life according to the practical virtues, which entail and are entailed by *φρόνησις*, a practical cognitive capacity that is *analogous* to an art but is not constituted by any theoretical art or science. The very best life, however, is life according to *σοφία*, which is theoretical knowledge of the divine. So Aristotle, like the Stoics, believes that the happiest life is life according to a theoretical virtue: this theoretical virtue is not physics only because Aristotle, unlike the Stoics, believes that the highest God, who is the highest object of contemplation, is not a physical being. The crucial difference is that the Aristotelian sage, who values *σοφία* most highly in itself, must still manage his life by *φρόνησις* to gain opportunity and tranquility for *σοφία*; whereas the Stoics insist that physics, besides being the most intrinsically desirable kind of contemplation, also gives us the principles we need for making practical decisions, so that a single kind of knowledge plays both the role of Aristotelian *σοφία* and the role of Aristotelian *φρόνησις*.

II.

The Stoics were led to assert that physics is practically motivating, and that the aim of life is to live *ὁμολογουμένως τῆ φύσει*, not because they thought this was obviously true, but because they thought it was the best hope for resolving problems in the Platonic and Aristotelian conception of the *τέλος* as a life according to virtue. I would like first to sketch what these problems were, and how the conception of physics as a virtue might help to solve them, before attempting a positive account of how physics would motivate action, and why the life it motivates would be a good one.

The problem is most clearly posed, not as a problem about virtue, but as a problem about what things are good. Virtue is certainly good, since virtue is a disposition of soul making it live well or be happy, and since the Stoics define the good as what is beneficial (AM XI, 22-27, DL VII, 94) or productive of happiness (AM XI, 30). But for the Stoics, following Plato, this account of goodness implies severe restrictions on what kinds of things can be good. Plato, assuming that "all good things are beneficial" (*Meno* 87e2), examines the claim of "health and strength and beauty and wealth . . . and the like" to be beneficial; he concludes that not only these bodily and external possessions, but also all psychic states other than knowledge, sometimes harm rather than benefit, i.e.,

that we sometimes abuse them, when we lack the knowledge of how to use them rightly. "So [says Plato] if virtue is something in the soul, and if it must be beneficial, it must be *φρόνησις*, since all the things in the soul are *αὐτὰ καθ' αὐτά* neither beneficial nor harmful, but when *φρόνησις* or *ἀφροσύνη* is added they become beneficial or harmful" (88c4-d1), where *φρόνησις* is simply a name for whatever kind of knowledge leads us to use the other things rightly. Plato thinks the right way to state the conclusion is not simply that things other than knowledge are *less good* than knowledge, or that they derive their goodness from the goodness of knowledge, but that since they "participate sometimes in the good, sometimes in the bad, and sometimes in neither," they themselves are "things that are neither good nor bad" (*Gorg.* 467e6-468a1).⁴ The Stoics, like Plato, insist that "the *ἴδιον* of the good is to benefit, not to harm," and thus that "what can be used both well and badly is not good, but wealth and health can be used both well and badly, therefore wealth and health are not good" (DL VII, 103).⁵ The Stoics conclude (as Plato seems to in the *Meno*) that good things cannot be other than knowledge; this means that any good thing either is knowledge or contains knowledge as a part, since the Stoics say that "parts are neither the same as the wholes nor other than the wholes" (AM XI, 24). Thus the argument does not show that all goods are knowledge, but rather that, if X is good, X cannot exist without knowledge, either because X is knowledge or because X is a whole consisting of knowledge and something else.

Both for Plato and for the Stoics, however, the restrictions on what can be good are much stricter than this. If something is good, it must be non-abusable, and most ordinary kinds of knowledge, including the standard examples of *τέχναι*, can be abused. So if what is good must

⁴ The *Gorgias* passage saying that things that can participate in either good or bad are themselves "neither good nor bad" is not, in context, saying that everything other than knowledge is neither good nor bad. But Plato says this in the *Meno* passage cited, and more emphatically at *Euthd.* 281d2-e5.

⁵ Stoic sources routinely insist that there is no good without virtue, or that the good is "virtue or what participates in virtue" (this phrase DL VII, 94, Stoic *baeus* II, 57 and II, 101). They also say that the good is "benefit or not other than benefit" (DL VII, 94, AM XI, 22); the connection between these two assertions is that what can exist apart from virtue (or from wisdom) can be abused, and what can be abused is not good (fairly explicit at AM XI, 61, DSR c.31). At least some Stoics cited Platonic precedent in disqualifying false "goods," for Antipater wrote a treatise in three books *περὶ τοῦ ὅτι κατὰ Πλάτωνα μόνον τὸ καλὸν ἀγαθόν* (SVF Antipater 56, from Clement).

be (or contain) knowledge, it must be some quite special kind of knowledge; virtue, in particular, must be some quite special knowledge. Knowledge of what? As Plato points out in the *Republic*, the “clever people” who say that the good is not pleasure but *φρόνησις* “are not able to explain which *φρόνησις*, but in the end are compelled to say that it is [*φρόνησις*] of the good” (*Rep.* VI, 505b5-6; *φρόνησις* here should probably be translated “knowledge”). If the good is simply knowledge of the good, then it is a knowledge that is simply knowledge of itself. This conclusion was accepted by the dissident Stoic Aristo of Chios, who says that the only good is virtue, where virtue is simply knowledge that the only good is virtue; but every other ancient philosopher finds the conclusion obviously objectionable, and so tries to find some way out of the reasoning that seems to lead to it. It will help to distinguish at least three different difficulties involved in Aristo’s thesis (call the thesis “the circularity of the good”), since some of the possible solutions would avoid some but not all of the difficulties. In the first place, it may be logically impossible for there to be a knowledge that is only knowledge of itself and not of anything else: Plato suggests at *Char.* 167-169 that this is impossible, and Sextus argues for this on the ground that in every science, “the things of which it is the science” exist prior to the science, so that “if *φρόνησις* is the science of itself, it must have existed prior to itself” (*AM* XI, 186-7). But suppose we grant Aristo’s claim that there is a special kind of knowledge, X, that is simply the knowledge of X. A second difficulty arises. As Plato complains in the *Republic*, those who say that the good is knowledge, and specifically knowledge of the good, “although they criticize us for not knowing the good, proceed to speak to us as if we knew it: for they say that it is *φρόνησις* of the good, as if we understood what they are speaking of when they pronounce the word ‘good’” (*Rep.* VI, 505c1-4). The circularity of the good might not trouble us if we already knew what the good was; but if we do not yet have this knowledge, then merely learning that the good is knowledge of the good will not give us this knowledge, or even help us to make progress towards it (it will not show us where to look for this knowledge, or how to recognize it if we find it); indeed, it is mysterious how anyone could possibly make the transition from not-having to having a knowledge that is simply knowledge of itself (cf. Plutarch’s argument in DCN c.27). This is a difficulty about *progress* [*προκοπή*] toward virtue; it is related to a third difficulty about the *ἐργον* of virtue. If virtue is some X that is simply knowledge of X, then what will the virtuous person *do* by having this

knowledge, that he could not do without it? Plato raises this difficulty in the *Euthydemus* and (if the dialogue is genuine) in the *Clitophon*; and neither of these texts comes up with any plausible *ἐργον* for virtue, except possibly to benefit other people, i.e., to make them virtuous, i.e., to teach them this same knowledge X, if it can be taught and learned (which our second difficulty suggests that it cannot). This is objectionable for two reasons. In the first place, if virtue has no *ἐργον*, or no *ἐργον* except more virtue, then although it is supposed to be good and beneficial, it seems that really it will not be good for anything, but sterile and useless. Secondly, it seems that we could never recognize a virtuous person, since he has no *ἐργον* by which we could distinguish him from a non-virtuous person; so we could never find someone to learn virtue from (if it can be learned), and if we did find such a person we could not find anything in his actions to imitate or to measure ourselves against.⁶

There are, of course, many ways to avoid these difficulties: but every solution has some cost. One way Plato tries to avoid circularity is to say that, despite the apparent conclusion of the *Meno* and *Euthydemus* arguments, there is some good, other than knowledge, which these arguments do not disqualify: while external possessions, and bodily and

⁶ Plato develops the difficulty about the circularity of the *ἐργον* of virtue in different ways at *Euthd.* 291c4-292e5, *Clit.* 408d1-410a6, *Char.* 171d1-175d5. Similar arguments are commonly used against Aristo (e.g., at Cicero *De Finibus* III, 12, III, 50), or against the Stoics in general, as at Plutarch DCN c.27, who cites the same phrase to mock the circularity of the opponent’s answers (“ὁ Διὸς Κόρυμβος,” apparently an endlessly repeated refrain in a children’s song) that Plato had cited in the *Euthydemus*. Apparently Chrysippus had originally used these arguments (from Plato) against Aristo; Carneades then argued against the Stoics by using Aristo’s arguments to show that the orthodox Stoic account of virtue must either reduce to Aristo’s or else admit that things other than virtue are good, while using Chrysippus’ arguments as a *reductio ad absurdum* of Aristo; Antiochus, Plutarch, and Sextus all use Carneades against the Stoics, while using him to support different positive positions. Aristo’s own view seems to have been that virtue simply has no distinctive *ἐργον*, and that the wise man is therefore unrecognizable: “for the sage is like a good actor, who, whether he puts on the mask of Theristes or of Agamemnon, will act either part *προσθηκόμενος*” (DL VII, 160). Aristo’s view, here and on some other points, is reminiscent of some extreme predestinarian and antinomian views which keep surfacing on the fringes of Christianity (and of some other religions): the orthodox Stoics’ attempt to avoid these consequences has some things in common with Calvin’s attempt to avoid antinomianism, and faces some of the same difficulties. I intend to return elsewhere to the theme of the circularity of the good in Stoic and anti-Stoic ethics.

psychic states other than knowledge, cannot be truly good, there is a separate good-itself which is not a good piece of knowledge, or a good anything else, but simply good; and the knowledge that is good is a knowledge of this good-itself, rather than a knowledge of knowledge. But although this solves the problem of formal circularity, it leaves several other problems unsolved. First, it is very hard to understand what such a good would be, separated from all bodies and souls; and even if Plato can explain what this thing is (e.g. by saying that it is the One), it is hard to understand what would be good about it. Second, even if such a thing exists and is supremely good, the problem of progress toward knowledge of this remote good remains almost as serious as if the knowledge were formally circular; Plato tries in *Republic* VII to explain what series of studies would lead up to our grasping the good, but he does not really describe a psychological mechanism by which we would succeed in grasping it. Third, it remains a serious problem what the *ἐργον* of this knowledge would be, beyond contemplating the good and teaching it to others if it is teachable; Plato claims that the person who has seen the good will rule his city well, but it is hard to see either why this person would want to engage in politics, or how his knowledge of the good will prescribe a particular way of governing the city. Plato may be able to overcome these difficulties, and there are also other premisses we could reject to avoid the embarrassing conclusions;⁷ but these difficulties are enough to suggest why the Stoics, in trying to save a broadly Platonic program in ethics, would be led to try their own different solution.

The Stoics accept Plato's argument that things other than knowledge are not good, and they reject Plato's escape of positing a good-itself separate from bodies and souls. They grant that ordinary kinds of knowledge, like carpentry and medicine, are abusable and so not good; so the good kind of knowledge must have a quite special cognitive content. But they refuse to grant that the content of this knowledge is simply the knowledge itself, partly because of the logical problem of circularity, partly because of the problems of *πρόκορη* and of the *ἐργον*

⁷ Aristotle, almost alone among ancient philosophers, admits that something good can harm or can have bad instances (so he can admit that pleasure, health, wealth are goods). But on the *supreme* good (both on God as pure knowledge and on *σφία* as our knowledge of God), Aristotle's position is close to Plato's, and is involved in the same difficulties of circularity, *ἐργον*, and *πρόκορη*. I come back to Aristotle's treatment of these problems (to contrast him with the Stoics) in Section IV below.

of virtue. So the Stoics take the only remaining way out: they say that although what is good must be (or contain) knowledge, it need not be knowledge of the good; other kinds of knowledge, which are not knowledge of the good, can also be good. Carpentry, which is not knowledge of the good, is not good, but the Stoics want to maintain that physics, which is also not knowledge of the good, is good: if they cannot quite *prove* that physics is good, at least they argue that it is not disqualified from being good by the same reasons that disqualify carpentry. At the same time, they want to maintain that physics, like carpentry, is a practical art, with an *ἐργον* other than contemplation and teaching: they want to explain how we can acquire this art (and how it can be taught), and they want to explain how this art can motivate and organize the actions of our lives as a whole (not merely, like carpentry, motivating a restricted sphere of our actions), so that it is a *τέχνη πρὸς ὄλον τὸν βίον* and a virtue.

III.

The Stoics cannot maintain that knowledge as such as good, since some kinds of knowledge can be abused, including ordinary arts such as carpentry and medicine. Since the Stoics want to maintain that *some* knowledge is good, they have to distinguish different kinds or grades of knowledge, and then argue that the highest grade of knowledge is good, and that physics belongs to this highest grade of knowledge. Like earlier Greek philosophers, the Stoics reserve the name *ἐπιστήμη* ("science" or "scientific knowledge") for the highest grade of knowledge, distinguishing it not only from *δόξα* (which is capable of being false) but also from lower grades of knowledge, which cannot be false but fall short in some other way.

The most general Stoic term for knowledge is *κατάληψις*: a *κατάληψις* is an assent to a *kataleptic φαντασία* or impression, an impression being *kataleptic* when it is "true, and of such a kind that it could not be false" (AM VII, 152), whereas *δόξα* is assent to a non-kataleptic impression. The Stoics do not take *κατάληψις* to be a particularly rare kind of knowledge: it is the kind of knowledge that ordinary arts are composed out of, so that they can define arts as "systems of *κατάληψεις* exercised together," and describe any particular *κατάληψις* as a

kind of miniature art.⁸ The interest of the analysis of the arts lies in the claim that the *ἐπιστήμη* needed for virtue will be a special kind of art; the analysis of ordinary arts will offer a model for conceiving this special art (as well as showing what is distinctive about it), and also (the Stoics hope) it will help solve the problem of *προκοπή*, by showing what sequence of studies can lead us to virtue. The Stoics define *ἐπιστήμη* as “*κατάληψις ἀσφαλῆς καὶ ἀμετάπτωτος ὑπὸ λόγου*,” but also as “a system of such *ἐπιστήμαι*” or “a system of artistic *ἐπιστήμαι* having stability of itself, as the virtues do” (Stobaeus II, 73-4). The latter definition has the advantage of showing the way by which we would attain *ἐπιστήμη*. *Κατάληψις* are stabilized by being supported by systems of interrelated *κατάληψις*. Only the wise have *ἐπιστήμη*, but ordinary people have *κατάληψις* and can build these up into arts; so if we can continue to build up the arts by accumulating more and more of the appropriate *κατάληψις*, we may be able to make the transition to *ἐπιστήμη*. As we will see, this theory of *προκοπή*, turning on a peculiarly Stoic analysis of the arts and of artistic motivation, does better than Plato’s theory in making intelligible the final transition to the highest grade of knowledge, and showing how this might be within our reach.⁹

The Stoics claim that, although *κατάληψις* and *τέχνη* as such are not good, *ἐπιστήμη* as such is good; so, in particular, physics and logic are

⁸ See the Stoic definition of art, cited by many authors in very similar forms, collected at SVF I, 73 and II, 93-97. The collections of definitions at SVF II, 93 [pseudo-Galen] and II, 95 [Philo] help to bring out the contrast between *τέχνη* and *ἐπιστήμη*. Only the wise have *ἐπιστήμη*, whereas fools too have *κατάληψις* (AM VII, 151-2); and fools can combine their *κατάληψις* into *τέχνη*, for the Stoics never doubt the claim of ordinary arts like carpentry and medicine to be *τέχνη*: *τέχνη* is a preferred indifferent (DL VII, 106), while *ἐπιστήμη* is a good (DL VII, 98 and Stobaeus II, 73). (See also AM XI, 207 and Simplicius *In Categoria* p.224 and p.284 on the *μέσα τέχνη* as distinguished from the virtues; Stobaeus II, 73 adds that *τέχνη*, when they occur in the sage are “altered by virtue and become *ἀμετάπτωτοι*,” which otherwise they would not be.) For each individual kateleptic impression as *τέχνη*-like see AM VII, 252.

⁹ When the Stoics say that *κατάληψις* is the criterion of truth, and that it is something intermediate between *δόξα* and *ἐπιστήμη*, and shared equally by the fool and the sage, their aim is to show that fools have sufficient resources to progress toward wisdom; and it is precisely to deny the possibility of progress toward wisdom that the sceptical opponents of Stoicism try to shoot down the doctrine of *κατάληψις*, and in particular to deny that it can be common to the fool and the sage (so Sextus, following Arcesilaus, at AM VII, 150-53).

good. The claim that *ἐπιστήμη* is good depends on the claim that *ἐπιστήμη* never harms, that is, that it never leads us to act in such a way that we would have been better off without it. To see why *ἐπιστήμη*, unlike other arts and *κατάληψις*, never lead us to this kind of action, we need to consider how arts or *κατάληψις* lead us to action in general, that is, how they motivate.

At first sight, the most problematic Stoic claim is not that physics or logic never motivate bad actions, but that they motivate action at all: how can they give us reason to act, if they do not contain knowledge of the good? But reflection shows that if, as the Stoics say, the good is very rare and inseparable from virtue, then none of the ordinary arts can motivate action by being a knowledge of the good; yet all practical arts, including not only the virtues but also carpentry and shoemaking, do motivate action somehow. Arts are composed of *κατάληψις*, so if practical arts motivate, this must be because they contain *κατάληψις* that motivate action; and fortunately, while we have few Stoic texts on how arts as such motivate, we have plenty of texts on how *κατάληψις*, and more generally assents to impressions, motivate action.

According to the Stoic theory of action, a *ὁρμή* or impulse to action is a certain special kind of assent to impressions; it is assent to a certain special kind of impression, what the Stoics call a “*ὁρμητικὴ φαντασία* of what is appropriate [*καθήκον*]” (Stobaeus II, 86). All my impressions have some propositional content, something that seems to me to be true; in this special kind of impression, what seems to be true is “it would be appropriate to do X” or “I ought to do X.” Assenting to such an impression is *exactly* the same act as having a *ὁρμή* to do X,¹⁰ we might say “willing” or “deciding” to do X: the translation of *ὁρμή* as “impulse” is misleading, since “impulse” suggests an inclination that we might or might not act on, whereas as soon as I have a *ὁρμή* to do X, it follows that I do X, as long as nothing external prevents me. Since every human action comes from some *ὁρμή*, hormetic impressions must be very common. All such impressions are impressions that

¹⁰ Stobaeus says (II, 88) that all *ὁρμαί* are assents; but he adds that although the same act is both an assent and a *ὁρμή*, it is not an assent and a *ὁρμή* to the same thing. Rather, the assent to the *proposition* “it is appropriate to do X” is a *ὁρμή* toward *doing* X, where “doing X” is a *κατηγόρημα* or predicate. Stobaeus says that there are also non-practical *ὁρμαί*: a probable example would be assenting to the impression “I ought to assent to this impression, or to this type of impressions,” which leads me only to assent, and not to perform any external action.

I *ought* to do something, but this is "ought" in a very general sense: obviously it is not always a specifically *moral* "ought," but, beyond this, not all actions are motivated even by a *eudaimonistic* "ought": I can assent to the impression that I ought to do X, without believing that doing X will contribute to my happiness or acquire some good for me.

The Stoics express this point by distinguishing between *ὀφρῆ* in general and its subspecies *ὀρεξις* (Stobaeus II, 87).¹¹ "*ὀρεξις* is in earlier philosophers the most general term for desire, covering both purely rational desire (*βουλήσις*, "wish") and irrational desires (such as *ἐπιθυμία*, "appetite");¹² Plato and Aristotle would say that all these desires arise from a judgment, either by the rational part or by some irrational part of the soul, that something is good, and that no human action arises without some judgment that something is good. The Stoics broadly accept the Platonic and Aristotelian description of *ὀρεξις*, but they say that some of our actions arise from *ὀφρῆ* that are not *ὀρεξις*, judgments that some action is appropriate but not that it is good or a means to a good. We can express this by saying that in addition to our "hot" motivations to pursue something we think is good or to flee something we think is evil (if irrational this motivation is *ἐπιθυμία* "appetite" or *φόβος* "fear," which are passions; if rational it is *βουλήσις* "wish" or *εὐλάβεια* "caution," which are *ἐπιτάξεις* or good affective states), we also have "cool" motivations, where we think it would be appropriate to do X, without thinking that we will be happier if we do X than if we fail to do it. An obvious phenomenological consequence is that if I have a "cool" *ὀφρῆ* to do X, I will *try* to do X, and I will actually do it if nothing external prevents me; but if something external does prevent me, I will not be grieved by this result.

The Stoic theory of "cool" motivation may seem like a radical break from the eudaimonism of earlier Greek philosophers; but we will see that it is consistent with at least some form of eudaimonism, and that even in Plato and Aristotle there are suggestions, not worked out into a

¹¹ On the Stoic theory of *ὀφρῆ*, and on the distinction between *ὀφρῆ* and *ὀρεξις*, see Inwood 1983.

¹² As Martha Nussbaum points out, *ὀρεξις* and *ὀρέγεσθαι* are technical terms in Aristotle but not in Plato (who uses *ὀρέγεσθαι*, but not *ὀρεξις*); but pseudo-Plato *Definitions* 413c8-9 shows that *ὀρεξις* was technical as the most general term for desire in the Academy. Nothing here depends on whether the Stoics read Aristotle's ethical works (though Chrysippus at least did so, DSR c.15) or on how much they cared about responding to them; the Stoics certainly read and responded to Old Academic writers, and Aristotle must serve us as their representative.

consistent theory, that we have "cool" as well as "hot" motivations. The Stoics develop these suggestions into a general theory of action because they need the theory of "cool" motivation to save the possibility of progress toward virtue. For the Stoics, goods are very rare, and non-sage has a *κατάληψις* of anything good that he can attain by action: so Epictetus tells his students to make use only of *ὀφρῆ* (and that "lightly and relaxedly and with reservation"), and to "let go of *ὀρεξις* entirely for the time being: for if you desire [*ὀρέγῃ*] any of the things that are not up to us, you are bound to meet with misfortune, and none of the things up to us that it would be fine to desire [*ὀρέγεσθαι*] is yet present to you" (*Enchiridion* c.2).¹³ The only *ὀρεξις* we could have in our present condition would be *ἐπιθυμία*, irrational assents to non-kataleptic impressions of the good; since it is always wrong to assent to try to act only on "cool" kataleptic *ὀφρῆ*, until we are sages and have knowledge of the good; then we will have rational *ὀρεξις* or *βουλήσις*.¹⁴ In our current condition, acting on "cool" kataleptic *ὀφρῆ* will not actually be good for us, any more than *κατάληψις* in general are good; but kataleptic *ὀφρῆ*, like *κατάληψις* in general, are shared by fools and sages, and give the path that fools must follow in order to become sages.

From this account of kataleptic *ὀφρῆ*, it is clear how arts must motivate. An art is just a collection of *κατάληψις* exercised together, and

¹³ Epictetus thinks we can have rational *ἐκκλήσις* (the contrary of *ὀρεξις*) even in our present condition; this makes sense, since we should be able to perceive the evils which are present to us, although not the goods which are not.

¹⁴ *Ἐπιθυμία* is defined as *ἀλογος ὀρεξις* (DL VII, 113, also Galen citing Chrysippus at PHP IV.2.3, IV.4.2, and pseudo-Andronicus *Περὶ παθῶν* at SVF III, 391); the Stoics "say that opposite to *ἐπιθυμία* is *βουλήσις*, which is *εὐλόγος ὀρεξις*" (DL VII, 116; same definition cited Stobaeus II, 87, pseudo-Andronicus SVF III, 432, cp. pseudo-Plato *Definitions* 413c8-9); and every *ὀρεξις* must be one or the other. *Βουλήσις* is a *ἐπιτάξεις* (DL VII, 116 and the pseudo-Andronicus passage) and therefore can exist only in the sage (this point made emphatically—in Latin, but the terminological equivalences are clear—by Cicero, TD IV, 12), as *ἐπιθυμία* and other passions exist only in fools. So non-sages cannot have rational *ὀρεξις*, though they can have rational as irrational *ὀρεξις*, but for him, although *βουλήσις* must originate in reason rather than in passion, it can still be based on a false belief that something is good; whereas the Stoics, following Platonic and Academic precedent, say that *ὀρεξις* for what falsely seems good, or is truly opinioned but not known to be good, is not really *βουλήσις*.)

an art will be practical, that is, will motivate action, just in case at least some of the *καταλήψεις* it contains are practical, i.e., are assents to *hormetic* katalaptic impressions. So an art like carpentry, or any other practical art that a non-sage can have, will motivate "coolly": carpentry contains no knowledge of the good, but it does contain knowledge of how it is appropriate to act in various situations that the artisan expects to confront in the practice of his art. This knowledge only gives us *ὀπμαί* "with reservation," that is, general rules on how to act in a certain type of situation, coupled with the awareness that in some particular cases this general rule will be overridden by some other consideration.¹⁵ Nonetheless, the person who has a practical art will, when he is confronted with a situation that the art teaches him to deal with, act according to the rules of the art, unless he knows of (or opines) something else that overrides these rules; but if, despite his having applied the rules of the art correctly, his action is prevented by circumstances outside his control from having its intended consequence, he will not be grieved.

Does this theory of "cool" artistic motivation contradict the eudaimonism which seems to be assumed by all Greek philosophers, and especially by Plato and Aristotle? It depends on how strong a eudaimonist thesis we are considering. A maximal eudaimonist thesis would be that we never have reason to prefer action X over action Y unless X would make us happier than Y: this implies that if X and Y would make us equally happy, we have no reason to prefer one over the other (and either we choose arbitrarily, or we cannot choose at all). A weaker eudaimonism would allow non-eudaimonic considerations to give reasons for preferring X over Y when both actions would make us equally happy. This exception might seem trivial, but since the Stoics think that happiness has only two values, "happy" and "unhappy," with no degrees,¹⁶ there will be a great many ties to break, and non-eudaimonic considerations will be very important in determining our actions. Plato and Aristotle do not share the Stoic view of happiness that would make tie-breaking so important, but they too admit that an art can rationally motivate us to seek outcomes that are not good for us; and they too suggest that this kind of motivation can become determining especially

¹⁵ On "reservation" [*πρὸς ἐλάττωσιν*] see Inwood 1985, esp. 119-26.

¹⁶ For the denial of degrees of happiness or misery, see Stobaeus II, 98-100, Plutarch DCN c.33. Happiness and virtue are *διαθέσεις* (DL VII, 89), and *διαθέσεις* (as opposed to *εἶδη*) do not admit intensification or remission (Simplicius *In Categorias* p.237).

once we have already secured what is best for ourselves. The Platonic Socrates argues against Thrasymachus that "the art of medicine does not aim at what is advantageous to the art of medicine, but at what is advantageous to the body . . . nor does horsemanship aim at what is advantageous to horsemanship, but to horses; nor does any other art aim at what is advantageous to itself, for it itself has no further needs, but at what is advantageous to what it is an art *of*" (*Rep.* I, 342c1-6). Here it is crucial to Plato's argument that the art is free to attend to its object's advantage because it has no needs of its own that would preempt its concern with its object: "there is no deficiency or wrong in any art, nor is it appropriate to an art to seek the advantage of anything other than what it is an art *of*, but, since it is right, it is itself inviolate and immune to harm, as long as each art is exactly and entirely what it is" (*Rep.* I, 342b3-6). What the art seeks is what the artisan seeks *qua* artisan: so Plato infers that "no doctor, *inasmuch as he is a doctor*, aims at or commands what is advantageous to the doctor, but what is advantageous to the patient" (*Rep.* I, 342d4-5). Of course it does not follow that because the *art* is non-deficient, the *artisan* is also non-deficient: the artisan, *qua* artisan, cares only about the things his art cares for, but *qua* human being he may have other concerns that override the concerns of his art. However, if the artisan's own good has already been satisfied, he will be free to care for the things subject to his art, and both Plato and Aristotle think this must be the case for a king: "the tyrant aims at what is advantageous to himself, the king at what is advantageous to those he rules. For he is not a king if he is not self-sufficient and abounding in all goods; and is he is such, he has no further need of anything else, so that he would aim not at what is beneficial to himself, but to those he rules; if he is not such, he would a king in name only" (*EN* VIII 10, 1160b2-7).¹⁷

These texts imply that the arts "aim at" or contain impulses toward

¹⁷ The last clause literally says "he would be a kind of king chosen by lot"—like the Athenian official called a *βουλευτής*, chosen by lot each year and exercising only symbolic and ritual functions. Aristotle in the *Politics* follows Plato in maintaining that true political rule, if not properly an art, is like the arts in seeking the good of the ruled rather than of the ruler. Plato does say that the true ruler may be unwilling to rule, since he will not get what is best for himself out of ruling (*Rep.* I, 345e5-346a1, 346e7-347a6); but if he is already guaranteed a sufficiency of goods, he has no motivation to override the motivation to exercise his art. If a true ruler is put in a position where he must rule, then he will rule well; he will not rule badly to benefit himself, even if he might prefer not to rule at all.

certain goals; the artisan will have the impulse to exercise the art in such a way as to attain these goals, unless this impulse is overridden by some other impulse extrinsic to the art.¹⁸ That is, if I have the art of medicine, and if I am presented with an appropriate occasion for exercising that art (a treatably sick person and the appropriate drugs or medical instruments), then I will have an impulse to exercise the art (to treat the patient), unless there is an overriding reason why not; and I will have an impulse to exercise the art in the way that the art says is appropriate (to treat the patient in a way that tends to make him healthier, not in a way that tends to make him less healthy), again unless there is some overriding reason why not. Aristotle expresses this point in general terms by saying that whatever has a *ἔξις* also *ἐνεργεῖ κατὰ τὴν ἔξις* (exercises the *ἔξις* or acts according to the *ἔξις*) unless something obstructs; the person who has a science is like a heavy body, which has a *ἔξις* of moving toward the center of the universe, and will exercise this by falling unless something else blocks it.¹⁹ This comparison is most straightforward in the case of a theoretical science, whose only exercise is contemplation; practical arts are more complicated, since they can be exercised in two contrary ways (the art of medicine can be used either to heal or to kill), whereas a stone can only fall in one direction. But here too Aristotle says that an art or "productive science," although it is a power for two contrary effects, is *per se* a power for the good contrary, and only *per accidens* a power for

¹⁸ The Stoic definition of art (texts collected at SVF I, 73 and II, 93-97) says not merely that it is a system of *καταλήψεις* exercised together, but that they are exercised together "towards some *τέλος* useful in life"; it is definitional of medicine that it is concerned with health, but also that it aims to produce or preserve health (cf. Galen *De sectis ingredientibus* c.1). An art, or reason in general, may be described as *commanding* the appropriate actions: an art "commands" what benefits the ruled (*Republic* I 346c3-7); *καθήκοντα* are "such things as *λόγος* convinces us to do" (DL VII, 105); *νόμος* is "night *λόγος* commanding what ought to be done and forbidding what ought not to be done" (SVF III, 332 [Clement] and parallels).

¹⁹ *Phys.* VIII 4, 255a30-b29. The same idea underlies Chrysippus' comparison of a person's disposition to the shape of a cylinder, which causes it to roll once it is given an initial push (Cicero *De Fato* 42-3, also SVF II, 1000 [Anilius Gellius]); once the appropriate external circumstance sets it off, it is the thing's own internal *ἔξις* that determines its typical pattern of motion, whether the thing is a gravitating body or a rational animal acting according to a rational disposition. If the disposition is an art, it will lead us to accord to a rational attitude impressions (and, if they are homnetic impressions, to act on them), whenever we encounter the objects that the art is concerned with.

its privation;²⁰ it is wrong to say that "medicine is about producing health and sickness: for medicine is about the former *per se*, and about the latter *per accidens*; for it is *simpliater* alien to medicine to produce sickness" (*Top.* VII 5, 143a2-5). So the doctor will not only be inclined to use the art of medicine on appropriate occasions; he will also be inclined to use it to produce health, rather than to produce disease.

The Stoic theory of artistic motivation, and thus in particular of the virtues, develops this Platonic picture of the arts. An art is a collection of *καταλήψεις*, items of knowledge, and an art is practical if some of these *καταλήψεις* are homnetic, that is, are knowledge of what actions are appropriate in certain situations. In the case of any ordinary art (any art that non-sages can have) this knowledge is only of what ought to be done, and not of what it would benefit us to do; these non-eudaimonic motivations (*ὀφθαί*) are outweighed by eudaimonic motivations (*ὀρεξίσεις*), but can and should determine our actions when eudaimonic considerations are neutral. Plato says that the aim sought by the art is not good for the artisan but good for the objects the art cares for; the Stoics, with strict standards for what counts as "good," say that the aim is not good at all, but "valued" or "preferred" in some other way.²¹ For the Stoics as for Plato, the shoemaker recognizes and approves of well-made shoes (shoes that are made in accordance with the rules of the art, and fulfill the function of shoes), and under the appropriate circumstances, unless some consideration extrinsic to the art overrides, he will try to produce such shoes out of the material he is given. Since he does not think they are good (certainly not for himself), he will suffer no passions over the shoes, and in particular he will not be grieved if, because of the poor quality of the leather or because he is asked to repair hopelessly worn-out shoes, he is unable to produce well-functioning shoes; he might be grieved if he has ruined the leather through a fault in his own workmanship, but the passion enters only through a deficiency in the art, and not when the art itself is functioning properly. We can see more clearly how the theory of the arts helps solve prob-

²⁰ *Metaph.* Θ 2, 1046b7-15. Here the contraries are not called good and bad, but only the positive (*τὸ ἰπτάχρον*) and its privation; Aristotle adds at *Metaph.* Θ 9, 1051a10-15 that the positive contrary is good and the privation is bad.

²¹ The word "preferred" (used in contrast to "good"), does not by itself give any solution, since it does not explain how or why we should prefer these things; the considerations about the arts help to explain what kind of valuing is involved. Note that the Stoics give "the expert's appraisal" as one of the senses of "value" (DL VII, 105, Stobaeus II, 83-4).

lems of Stoic ethics, especially the problem of progress toward virtue, if we contrast the Stoic with the Kantian account of artistic motivation. For Kant, an art is merely knowledge of the means by which we can bring about various results (e.g., how we can cut and shape leather into shoes serving a given function); this knowledge motivates by giving us a hypothetical imperative, commanding us to perform some action *if* we desire some result, where we know that this action would be a means to that result. Such a hypothetical imperative will not motivate us to act, unless it is accompanied by some categorical source of motivation, where this might be either a categorical imperative of reason prescribing some end for us, or a passion that simply leads us to desire some end, without knowing that that end is objectively rational. To translate Kant's view into Stoic language, he is saying that *καταλήψεις* do not motivate us to act unless we also have an *ᾠρέξις*, an assent to the impression that some end is good or desirable; this *ᾠρέξις* could be either a rational *κατάληψις* of the good, or a passion whereby we assent to a non-kataleptic impression that something is good, but in either case it combines with the rest of our knowledge to motivate us to choose a means to this desired end. Kant's thesis thus implies that until we have virtuous motivation (that is, until we have a rational apprehension of the good), all of our action is dependent on the passions, and our reason serves only to find means to satisfy these passions. This conclusion would be disastrous for the Stoics, because it undermines the Stoic ethical project of progressing toward virtue through *καταλήψεις*: for, if Kant is right, our *καταλήψεις* cannot motivate appropriate action unless we already have virtue. For the Stoics, by contrast, it is crucial that "the fool does some of the appropriate actions, though not from an appropriate disposition" (SVF III, 512 [Philo]), since this is the only way he can make progress toward virtue: as Aristotle agrees, we must begin to learn a virtue by doing *the right actions* that the virtue prescribes, and only later come to do them *in the right way*, by having the virtue and acting according to it.

For the Stoics, the ordinary practical arts are not "appropriate dispositions," *not* because (as Kant thinks) they require a further categorical motivation to use them well or ill, but because, although they motivate categorically, they do not do so *stably* or *reliably*. Whenever the Stoics distinguish *ἐπιστήμαι* or virtues from ordinary arts or *καταλήψεις*, they repeat that *ἐπιστήμαι* and virtues are stable or reliable or unchangeable by reason [*ἀσφαλές, βέβαιον, ἀμετάπτωτον* or

ἀμετάπτωτον ὑπὸ λόγου].²² Plato and his immediate students had already used terms like this to distinguish *ἐπιστήμη* from *δόξα*: thus the pseudo-Platonic *Definitions* define *ἐπιστήμη* as *ὑπόληψις ψυχῆς ἀμετάπτωτος ὑπὸ λόγου* (414b10), by contrast with opinion, which is *ὑπόληψις μεταπειστός ὑπὸ λόγου* (414c3); the *Timaeus* says that "[*ἐπιστήμη*] is unmoved by persuasion, while [opinion] is *μεταπειστόν*" (*Tim.* 51e4), and the *Meno* says that true opinions tend to run away from us, like Daedalus' statues, unless they are tied down by reasoning out the cause, so that they become *ἐπιστήμη* (*Meno* 97d-98a).²³ Here Plato (and the *Definitions*) assume a dichotomy of all our judgments into opinion and *ἐπιστήμη*; by contrast, the Stoics (who think that the ordinary person does not have *ἐπιστήμη*, and yet that he needs something more than opinion if he is to make progress toward *ἐπιστήμη*) assign to the intermediate class of *κατάληψις* some characteristics that Plato thinks are proper to opinion, and some he thinks are proper to *ἐπιστήμη*. *Καταλήψεις*, unlike opinions, are intrinsically of such a kind that they could never be false; but, unlike *ἐπιστήμη*, they are *μετάπτωτοι*, unstable or liable to be overturned.

The sources do not give us a clear account of the meanings of *ἀσφαλής, βέβαιος*, and *ἀμετάπτωτος ὑπὸ λόγου*. It is not clear whether these terms are exactly equivalent, or only closely associated. Also, at least the terms *ἀσφαλής* and *βέβαιος* could be taken in two rather different ways. Perhaps a judgment is *ἀσφαλής* and *βέβαιος* just in case,

²² *Ἐπιστήμη* is described as the kind of *κατάληψις* which is *ἀσφαλές, βέβαιος*, and/or *ἀμετάπτωτος* (or *ἀμετάπτωτος ὑπὸ λόγου*), with one of these terms freely substituted for another, or two or all three conjoined, in the definitions of *ἐπιστήμη* at DL VII, 47, Stobaeus II, 73-4, Sextus AM VII, 151, SVF II, 93 [pseudo-Galen], and SVF II, 95 [Philo]; whatever the sage believes he does *ἀσφαλῶς* και *βέβαιως* (Stobaeus II, 112); Zeno and Aristotle and Chrysippus assert that virtue is *λόγος ομοιογενέως* και *βέβαιος* και *ἀμετάπτωτος* (Plutarch *De virtute morali* c.3), and Cleanthes thought virtue could not be lost because of *βέβαιον καταλήψεις* (DL VII, 127); the Stoics think that the greatest good is *τὸ ἀμετάπτωτον ἐν ταῖς κρίσεσι* και *βέβαιον*, referred back to as *ἀσφαλῆτα* και *βέβαιότης* (Plutarch DCN c.8); *μέγα* *τέχνη* (as opposed to the virtues) "fall short of *βέβαιος εὐεργετία*" (Simplicius *In Categoria* p.224), and Chrysippus says that the person who performs all the *καθήκοντα* becomes happy only when these *μέγα πράξεις* acquire *τὸ βέβαιον* (Stobaeus v.906-7).

²³ Compare Aristotle objecting, against what must have been a Platonic or Academic definition of *ἐπιστήμη*, that it is metaphorical (and thus improper in a definition) to say that *ἐπιστήμη* is *ἀμετάπτωτος* (*Top.* VI 2, 139b32-3). Even earlier, Gorgias warns that *ἡ δόξα, σφαλῆσα* και *ἀβέβαιος οὕσα, σφαλερῆς* και *ἀβέβαιος εὐρυχῆς περιβάλλει τοὺς αὐτῆ ὑπομένους* (*Helena*, 11).

once we have it, we will never be led to abandon it; this is what *ἀμετάπτωτος* also suggests. But it is equally plausible that a judgment is *ἀσφαλής* and *βέβαιος* if, *so long as we hold to it*, it will not lead us astray. These two senses are connected, and I think that the Stoics meant both. A judgment is *ἐπιστήμη* if it is unchangeable *by reason*,²⁴ and we would have reason to change a judgment only if either it had actually led us astray in some circumstance, or we conceived of some hypothetical circumstance in which it *would* lead us astray. One definition of *ἐπιστήμη* is as “a disposition in the reception of *φαινάσια*, *ἀμετάπτωτος ὑπὸ λόγου*” (DL VII, 47, Stobaeus II, 74); someone with such a disposition responds consistently to all *φαινάσια* that are presented to him, and so never has reason to alter his disposition; and this is possible only if the disposition never leads him to judge wrongly in response to *φαινάσια*.

Arts and *καταλήψεις* cannot contain false judgments; but they are *μετάπτωτοι ὑπὸ λόγου*, since they can lead us to judge wrongly in response to *φαινάσια* under some circumstances. This is easiest to see in the case of practical arts (for example, the art of ophthalmology). The art may tell me that it is *καθῆκον* to do X (e.g., to treat eye-inflammations with a certain drug), and yet in some special circumstances there may be other reasons arguing that it is not *καθῆκον* to do X (when this drug would damage the patient’s overall health), and someone who has only this art will either ignore the reasons for not doing X, or, if he is aware of the conflicting reasons, will waver, because he has no rational way to resolve the dispute.²⁵ Because the *καθήκοντα* that the art prescribes have exceptions,²⁶ the art is not stable or reliable, and gives us consistency of action only within a narrow range of circumstances. An art of this kind is *μετάπτωτος ὑπὸ λόγου*, not merely because so-

²⁴ Note that on Chrysippus’ view it always *can* be changed *non-rationally*, due to an attack of melancholy or the like (DL VII, 127).

²⁵ To see why there might be a problem if we follow the dictates of ophthalmology, consider the fragment of Herophilus *On Eyes*: “for those who cannot see in the daytime, twice daily rub on an ointment [composed of] gum, the manure of a land-crocodile, vitriolic copper, and the bile [gall] of a hyena made smooth with honey; and give the patient goat-liver to eat on an empty stomach” (Herophilus Fr. 260 von Staden, von Staden’s translation).

²⁶ As DL VII, 109 shows, all *μέσα καθήκοντα* have exceptions (a *καθῆκον* holds except under exceptional circumstances). A doctor who withholds the truth so that the patient will not flee from treatment does something (an action-type) that is not *καθῆκον*, but does it *δεύτως* (SVF III, 513 [Philo]).

physical arguments might wrongly persuade us not to do what the art commands, but because there may be genuinely overriding reasons, whose merits the art cannot assess. By contrast, an *ἐπιστήμη* has already taken all possibly overriding reasons into account, so that it cannot be overturned by any new circumstances that may arise; and so what is done according to such an *ἐπιστήμη* can never go wrong, but is a “perfect *καθήκον*” or *κατόρθωμα*.

The example of ophthalmology illustrates how arts can be abused, even though each art naturally tends to produce appropriate action, and even though there is no good or bad will beyond our particular impressions and judgments. If an art tells us that it is generally *καθῆκον* to do X, we will go wrong if we are unaware of (or if we reject) an overriding reason telling us that, in this particular circumstance, it is *καθῆκον* not to do X, and to use the art otherwise than as the art by itself would direct us. In this case, we will be saved from going wrong if we assent to a kataleptic impression, outside of and overriding the art, about what is *καθῆκον* to do in the present circumstance; this happens if the ophthalmologist assents to a kataleptic hornemic impression taken not from the art of ophthalmology but from the superior art of medicine, and decides not to apply the drug that would damage the patient’s overall health (but, perhaps, to use his knowledge of ophthalmology in some other way). This same *overridability* of the commands of the arts also allows us to go wrong in a second way, namely if we allow a *non-kataleptic* hornemic impression to override what the art tells us is *καθῆκον*; this would happen if the ophthalmologist, not having the art of medicine, allows a non-artistic fear of damaging the patient’s overall health to prevent him from doing what is appropriate for the inflamed eye, and instead uses his knowledge of ophthalmology in a way that is less appropriate for the eye. In either case, the moral of the story as the Stoics see it is not that knowledge is dangerous in the absence of a good will, but rather that an isolated piece of knowledge, in the context of a greater ignorance, can do harm.

To consistently avoid misusing an inferior art (like ophthalmology) in either of these two ways, we need a superior art (like medicine): the superior art will allow us to recognize when any reason from outside the domain of the inferior art overrides what the inferior art commands; the superior art also allows us to reject any inadequate reasons that might wrongly dissuade us from following the art. As the example of ophthalmology and medicine suggests, the superior art that is able to regulate the inferior art in this way will be an art concerned with *the*

whole: an art will be superior when it is concerned with a larger object, particularly one that contains the object of the inferior art as a functioning part, as the human body contains the eyes; the Stoics also describe the inferior art as itself a functioning part of the superior art (so surgery and medicine, Ammonius *In Analytica Priora* p.9). The superior art encompasses a broader range of the actions of our lives (e.g., all those actions directed to preserving or restoring the proper functioning of the human body, as opposed to the narrower range of actions directed to preserving or restoring the proper functioning of the eyes), and so it allows us to perform a broader sphere of actions consistently (to consistently tend to the body, vs. consistently tending to the eyes); there are fewer reasons that can overturn, either rightly or wrongly, the commands of the superior art, because it already takes into account and assesses a broader range of reasons for action. The superior art is thus closer to being stable and non-abusable; but the truly stable and non-abusable art will be one that deals with a maximal object, takes into account the broadest range of reasons for action, and encompasses all the actions of our lives, so that it is a τέχνη περὶ ὅλου τῶν βίωσιν, and living according to it is living ὁμολογουμένως.

What is the supreme art that stands above the art of medicine as the art of medicine stands above ophthalmology? When Plato contrasts the person who tends only to the eye with the good doctor who considers the whole body (*Char.* 156b-157a), he suggests that the supra-medical art (standing to ordinary medicine as medicine stands to ophthalmology) is the art of tending to the soul;²⁷ and at *Gorg.* 464b he identifies πολιτικὴ τέχνη as such a medicine of the soul. Chrysippus too is willing to speak of a medicine of the soul (quoted by Galen *PHP* V.2.22ff),

²⁷ The *Charmides* is claiming (or rather, Socrates in the *Charmides* represents the fictional “doctors of Zalmoxis” as claiming) that the eyes themselves cannot be correctly treated without treating the whole body, and that the body itself cannot be correctly treated without treating the soul. The idea that diseases of the body can (and should) be cured by directly treating the soul is pre-Platonic (see Claus 1981) and Plato echoes this tradition here and elsewhere; but the present context is not entirely serious, and Plato may be verbally playing with the earlier claim that the health of the soul produces health in the body, while really meaning only that the health of the soul is intrinsically more important than the health of the body (because the soul uses the body, and better a sound artisan with damaged tools than an incompetent artisan with efficient tools). Here as elsewhere Plato contrasts the merely empirical doctor, who treats only the immediately affected part, with the ideal of the scientific doctor, who considers the whole body and understands how diseases are caused and why the appropriate treatments cure them (cp. *Phdr.* 270b-d).

but this cannot really explain what the supreme art is, or what ἐργον it has, because of the problem of circularity: as the *Cleitophon* points out, it does not tell us what virtue is to say that virtue is the medicine of the soul, so that its ἐργον is the health of the soul, where the health of the soul is again virtue. But the Stoics also draw a different lesson from the medical analogy: as the art that tends to the eye is subordinate to the art that tends to the whole human body, so the art that tends to the human body is subordinate to the art that tends to the body of the world as a whole; and this is the art of physics.²⁸ So Chrysippus is quoted as saying, “as long as what comes next is unclear to me, I will hold in each case to what is better suited [εὐθυτέστερον] for attaining τὰ κατὰ φύσιν, for God himself has made me such as to select these things: but if I knew that it was now fated for me to be sick, I would have an impulse even to that: for my foot too, if it had intelligence, would have an impulse to step in the mud” (Epictetus *Discourses* II, vi.9). Being submerged in mud is not κατὰ φύσιν for a foot considered in isolation, it would not be recommended by the art of foot-care, and, unless there are overriding considerations, I should keep my feet dry; but the concerns of the person trying to get from one side of the muddy street to the other override the concerns of his feet; so intelligent feet would select not what is κατὰ φύσιν for themselves narrowly construed, but what is κατὰ φύσιν for the whole of which they are functioning parts. The point of Chrysippus’ analogy is that a human being is to the cosmos as a foot is to a human being. As long as I am not aware of any overriding consideration, I will have a ὄψιν toward “what is better suited for attaining τὰ κατὰ φύσιν,” that is, toward what the art of caring for my body would recommend; but it is rational to allow this art to be overridden by knowledge of what is appropriate for the cosmos, of which I am a functioning part. To know that I am fated to be sick is not simply to know that I will be sick: Chrysippus defined fate as “the λόγος of

²⁸ Compare Plato reminding us that “all γένηται comes to be for the sake of this, that the life of the whole [universe] should have a blessed existence; it does not come to be for the sake of you, but you for the sake of it. For every doctor and every skillful craftsman does everything for the sake of the whole: striving towards what is best overall, he produces the part for the sake of the whole and not the whole for the sake of the part” (*Laws* X, 903c3-d1, reading *συντεταμένω* at c7). The word “craftsman” [δημιουργός] reminds us of the divine craftsman of the universe; we are urged to replace our own partial and self-centered perspective with his perspective, which is the objective perspective of the art of world-making or world-doctoring, and to judge the state of our own bodies by their contribution to the overall health of the world-body.

the cosmos" or more fully as "the λόγος of the things in the cosmos governed by providence" [Stobaeus I, 79: we can translate "λόγος" provisionally as "plan," although there is probably a specific reference to the *σπερματικοί λόγοι*, of which more below].²⁹ To know that I am fated to be sick is to know that this is in accordance with the providential plan for the cosmos, where providence "is chiefly concerned with these things, first that the world should be as suited as possible to endure, next that it should lack nothing, and above all that there should be in it an extraordinary beauty and every adornment" (Cicero DND II, 58); this is essentially the same list of benefits that the demiurge of the *Timaeus* secures for the cosmos (32d-33d), following medical precepts to keep the world "free from age and sickness" (33a2-6). The art that overrides caring for my own health is the art of caring for the health of the cosmos; this art consists in knowing, and therefore having an impulse toward, what is in accord with "the λόγος of the things in the cosmos governed by providence." This art is certainly physics, since *φύσις* is just the same as fate or providence (Zeno according to Stobaeus I, 78), and for something to happen by nature is the same as for it to happen according to this all-comprehending plan. The art of physics is *σφραγής* and *αμετάπτωτον ὑπὸ λόγου*, because there are no further external concerns that could override it as it overrides ordinary medicine; since we are functioning parts of the cosmos, and the whole of our lives are spent serving its ends either well or badly, the art of caring for the health of the cosmos would be a *τέχνη περὶ ὄλου τῶν βίον*, and living according to it would be living *ὁμολογουμένως*.

Physics is therefore both a theoretical and a practical art: it is "the experience of what happens by nature," but since to happen by nature is to happen according to the plan for the cosmos, this knowledge is (among other things) evaluative, judging what is *κατὰ φύσιν* and what is *παρὰ φύσιν*. If I have the art of physics and know that some outcome is *κατὰ φύσιν*, I will have an impulse toward it; just as, if I have the art of shoemaking and know that some outcome is *κατὰ* that art, I will have an impulse toward that. There is no difference in the *kind* of motivation: in particular, both impulses are free from any desire for the good, so that I will feel no grief if I apply the rules of the art correctly and yet do not obtain the intended outcome. There are *quantitative* differences between the arts (physics is applicable in every action of my

life, shoemaking only in a restricted sphere of actions), and a *hierarchy* of motivation (physics overrides shoemaking), but the way physics motivates action is continuous with ordinary kinds of motivation, and we can make progress toward physics through ordinary theoretical and practical *καταλήψεις*, without needing any *κατάληψις* of the good.

The *ἔργον* of physics, as a practical art, will be to select consistently the things that are according to nature. So we can see the *τέλος*-formulae of Chrysippus' successors as attempts to spell out the practical consequences of Chrysippus' not-very-practical-sounding formula that the *τέλος* is "to live in accordance with experience of what happens by nature." So Diogenes of Babylon says that the *τέλος* is "reasoning well in the selection of the things according to nature" [DL VII, 88, cp. SVF Diogenes 44-46]; and Antipater, spelling out the practical consequences of such reasoning, says that the *τέλος* is "continuously and unswervingly to select the things according to nature and to deselect the things contrary to nature" [SVF Antipater 58 (Clement), cp. 57 (Stobaeus)]. What is good about such a life is neither *getting* the things according to nature, nor *selecting* or *trying* to *get* the things according to nature, but just the *consistency* and the *reasoning well* in selecting them. This is a paradoxical conclusion: Plutarch objects (DCN cc.26-27) that it is absurd to place the good in the selection of things that are not good, and that reasoning *well* would not lead us to select such things. But this is the only way the Stoics can describe the good in order to avoid circularity; and they develop the theory of "cool" motivation to explain how reasoning well would lead us to select things that are not good. Content selection of the things according to nature is good because it is the exercise of the art of physics, and the art of physics is good. So Posidonius describes the *τέλος*, neither simply in terms of the knowledge we need, nor simply in terms of its practical results, but as "to live contemplating the truth and order of the universe, and cooperating in constructing it according to our ability" (Fr. 186 Edelstein-Kidd [from Clement], leaving out the last phrase): the contemplation of the universe is good in itself, and the contemplation spontaneously produces the action.³⁰

²⁹ The parallel text of the pseudo-Plutarchan *Placita* gives *νόμος* instead of *λόγος* in the second definition; both texts given by Diels, DG p.323.

³⁰ So Cicero at DND II, 37 quotes Chrysippus as saying that "man has arisen for contemplating and imitating the world."

IV.

For the Stoics, in sharp contrast to Aristotle, physics is a practical or productive art, leading to action as well as contemplation. Aristotle would grant that there are some things whose forms are grasped only by a productive art, and not by any purely theoretical discipline: we can know a house (or any other artifact) scientifically only by knowing how the artisan produced it, thus only by having the same knowledge the artisan himself had; but this applies only to artifacts, not to the cosmos or to the natural things within it.³¹ But for the Stoics, the cosmos and its components *are* artifacts; we can know the cosmos only by having the same practical knowledge that Zeus needed when he produced the ordered universe out of the preceding conflagration. We can better understand how this art would motivate us to act by reflecting on how it motivates Zeus to act; indeed, since a human sage is “an animal . . . rarer than the phoenix” (Alexander *De Fato* p. 199), Zeus is the only *obvious* example of someone who has the art of physics, and he exercises it on a large and readily observable scale.

For the Stoics, following Plato's *Laws*, the most basic thesis of physics is that the world is governed by art and rationality, and not by irrational powers. The works of τέχνη and νοῦς, says Plato, are prior to “what is wrongly called nature and natural things,” heavy and light bodies and their movements; Plato rejects this common use of “nature,” since soul, being first in the order of generation, has a better right to be called “natural” (*Laws* X, 892b-c). Zeno simply transposes this Platonic point into corporeal terms when he says, against those who “think that nature is an irrational power compelling necessary motions in bodies” (DND II, 81), that nature is “a craftsmanly fire, proceeding methodically to generation” (DND II, 57 = DL VII, 156; DND II, 81 “a power participating in reason and order, proceeding methodically . . .”); to say that nature “proceeds methodically” [ὁδῶ βαδίζει] to generation just means that it generates by art, since an art is by definition ἐξ ἑσῶ δόπουρτικῆ (SVF I, 72 [from the scholia on Dionysius Thrax]). This is not a definition of a single Nature, but of the natures of different natural things; God or Zeus is defined specifically as the nature *of the world*, and so as “a craftsmanly fire, proceeding methodically to the generation *of the world*” (“Aetius” at DG pp. 305-6), himself an artisan

³¹ But, *contra* the usual Aristotelian position, cf. PA I 1, 640a1-10, denying that physics is a θεωρητικὴ ἐπιστήμη, and apparently implying that it is ποιητικῆ.

and using all the other natures as instruments to produce the world as a whole.³² Zeus is himself the σπερματικὸς λόγος of the world (DL VII, 136), and “contains all the σπερματικοὶ λόγοι according to which the particular things come to be according to fate” (“Aetius”, *ibid.*). Here the σπερματικὸς λόγος of an animal or plant is whatever is in the seed that explains how the seed can shape the organism “artistically,” producing each organ when and where it is καθήκον; since the universe is itself a living thing, it has an all-comprehending λόγος: a plan that Zeus has when he first begins shaping the universe, and this must contain within itself the plans for all the particular animals that Zeus will construct within the universe, where and when it is καθήκον for the universe as a whole.³³

Zeus is an artisan, literally and not metaphorically, and he uses his art, and his instruments the σπερματικοὶ λόγοι, to produce and then govern the cosmos; the *De Natura Deorum* text, after saying that the nature of the world is an artisan, rubs in the point that “the nature of the world has all those voluntary motions and inclinations and impulses that the Greeks call ὀρμαί, and it carries out actions in accordance with these, in the same way that we ourselves do when we are moved by reason and sensation” (DND II, 58). In producing the world, Zeus acts according to his ὀρμαί, his assents to impressions of what is καθήκον; since Zeus is wise, all of his assents are καταλήψεις, and so Zeus’ stock of knowledge must be sufficient to motivate him to produce the world. The knowledge Zeus needs in order to produce the world is knowledge of what is κατὰ φύσιν. He is not like the God of Descartes, who arbitrarily decrees what the laws of nature will be: since Zeus’ will is determined by his normative knowledge of what actions are καθήκον, the norms must be independent of his will. Zeus knows what

³² DND II, 57-58, claiming to be following Zeno, contrasts other natures, which are merely *artificiosae*, with the nature of the whole world, which is itself an *artifex*.

³³ So Cleanthes is reported as saying that “just as all the parts of any one thing arise [φύεττα] from the seeds at the appropriate [καθήκοντα] times, so too the parts of the whole [universe], including animals and plants, arise [φύεττα] at the appropriate [καθήκοντα] times. And as certain λόγοι of the parts are mingled together in the seed, and then are separated out when the parts are generated, so all things [in the universe] are generated from one [the preceding conflagration, or the moisture into which it is transformed], and from all things they are collected into one [in the succeeding conflagration], methodically and harmoniously traversing the circuit [the life-cycle of the universe from one conflagration to the next]” (Stobaeus I, 45); compare Cicero, DND II, 81-86.

is *κατὰ φύσιν* for the cosmos as a whole, and he knows how to accomplish it, using the *σπερματικοὶ λόγοι* to construct the particular functional parts of the cosmos, doing what is *κατὰ φύσιν* for the particular parts unless this is overridden by the concerns of the cosmos as a whole. The knowledge of what is *κατὰ φύσιν* is physics; and it is the greatest of all practical or productive arts, since its *ἔργον* is the entire world. Zeus' motivation, like the motivation of Plato's demiurge, is "cool" or disinterested: he was sufficient for himself in the *ἐκτρέφωσις*, and stands nothing to gain by creating the world. Plato explains the demiurge's actions by saying that "he was good, and in the good no grudgingness ever arises about anything" (*Tim.* 29e1-2), so that "the god wanted everything to be good, and nothing bad, as far as possible" (*Tim.* 30a2-3); the Stoics would have to replace "good" in this last clause with "*κατὰ φύσιν*," but they share the basic picture of the creator's motives, and their theory of artistic motivation explains why, because he is good or virtuous, that is, because he possesses a secure and all-comprehensive art, he would be motivated in this way. Zeus creates the world because this is what he does professionally, and because, secure in his virtue and happiness, he has no overriding reason not to do so. It is natural to worlds that they last only a finite time; but when the world has run its course, and in the next conflagration there is again only Zeus, then Zeus creates the world again, since the same reasons will motivate him in the same situation; and because he made the world correctly the first time according to the rules of his art, he will make it in exactly the same way again.

What Zeus does in creating the world may seem very different from what a human sage can be expected to do. But the Stoics insist emphatically that it is not. It is old Socratic tradition to argue that virtue is the same for a man and for a woman, that one needs the same knowledge (or the same disposition) to run a household well or to run an army or a city well or to manage whatever sphere of activity one is entrusted with. The Stoics take up this Socratic tradition—Cleanthes wrote a book *περὶ τοῦ ὄρι ἢ αὐτῆ ἀρετῆ ἀνόδος καὶ γυναικός* (DL VII, 175)—and take it one step further: as several texts (preserved mainly by scandalized Platonists and Christians, SVF III, 245-252) agree in telling us, it is also the same virtue of a mortal and of a god (presumably for the same reason, that you need the same skills to run a city well and to run a universe well). Plutarch quotes Chrysippus as saying that "Zeus does not

exceed Dion in virtue . . . if they are both sages" (DCN c.33);³⁴ this means not only that Zeus does not have Dion's virtues in a higher degree than Dion does (and he cannot, since there are no degrees of virtue), but also that Zeus has no virtue that Dion does not have (again, he cannot, since the virtues are inseparable). In particular, since Zeus creates the universe by a virtue, Dion must have the same virtue, although he cannot use it to create a universe. Zeus is bigger and more powerful than Dion, and he may also have auxiliary information that helps him in exercising his art; but the basic structure of knowledge that motivation must be the same.³⁵ As the *τέλος*-formulae assert, both Zeus and Dion apply their knowledge by selecting what is *κατὰ φύσιν*, where the *κατὰ φύσιν* is "motion or rest coming about according to the *σπερματικοὶ λόγοι*, like health or sensation (in the sense of the *κατὰ φύσιν* [i.e., normal non-distorted sense-perception]) or strength" and whatever participates in such a motion or rest (Stobaeus II, 82). An animal is strong and healthy when its *σπερματικὸς λόγος* is able to carry out the natural plan for that animal without impediment; what is *κατὰ φύσιν* for a particular animal is what is in accord with the *σπερματικὸς λόγος* for that animal, and what is *κατὰ φύσιν* absolutely is what is in accord with the rational plan for the world as a whole, which may override what would be natural for particular parts of the world. So for Zeus to select the *κατὰ φύσιν* is just for him to carry out the rational plan for the world as a whole, according to the *σπερματικοὶ λόγοι* that he contains. For Dion to select the *κατὰ φύσιν* is for him to cooperate in carrying out this same rational plan, to the best of his ability and knowledge: in Posidonius' words, "to live contemplating the truth and order of the universe, and cooperating in constructing it according to

³⁴ The wordplay, lost in English ("οὐκ ὑπερέχειν τὸν Δία τοῦ Δίωτος") makes the point all the sharper, and all the more offensive to most ancient ears. Plutarch also cites Chrysippus at DSR c.13 as saying of "all the good" that they are "in no respect [*κατ' οὐδέν*] surpassed by Zeus."

³⁵ Dion need not be omniscient. Although all sages must share all the *κατὰ φύσιν* that make up the virtues, Stobaeus says (II, 73; cp. Plutarch DCN c.7) that the sage can also have other *κατὰ φύσιν* or *τέχνη*, which are stabilized by virtue and so become *ἐπιστημῆμα*; these are good but are not virtues (because not necessary for living well), and one sage may have more of them than another. Zeus and Dion are like two doctors, with the same medical training, one of whom has a plentiful supply of drugs and bandages and instruments, when the other must make do in field conditions. The first doctor will also have more knowledge than the second (since he can, e.g., take X-rays of the patient), but this does not make him any more a doctor, since the additional auxiliary knowledge is not a part of the art of medicine.

our ability." Dion does not desire what Zeus desires *because Zeus desires it*; Dion desires it for the same reason that Zeus desires it, namely because it is in accordance with the art of governing the universe.

This helps to explain why the Stoics say that we must follow the will of Zeus. The point is not that Zeus is all-powerful, nor even that he is benevolent, but simply that he has expert knowledge of how to live, and of how to manage a universe. This is especially important if you are not yet a sage, and are trying to make progress toward becoming one: the right way to learn wisdom is to apprentice yourself to a sage, following his commands and imitating his actions; since Zeus is the only available sage for us to follow, we should start by observing Zeus' actions, and also by paying heed to the commands Zeus gives us, i.e., to the basic impulses to pursuit and avoidance that Zeus originally implants in our nature. The so-called "oikeiōsis" accounts (Cicero *De Finibus* III, 16-23 and fragmentary parallels) try to show that Zeus or nature has in fact given us a program of instruction that would suffice to lead us to virtue, if we were not turned away (chiefly by a corrupting society) into false opinions. The point of these accounts is not (as some recent writers think) to justify virtue on the grounds that this is what nature inclines us to; the point is rather to show how we can make progress toward virtue, beginning with our ordinary natural impulses and our ordinary *καταλήψεις* of what is according to nature, and accumulating knowledge and dispositions to act, until we reach a stable and harmonious selection of the things according to nature, and the knowledge that this selection is itself good. One consequence of the *oikeiōsis*-account is to show (against the serious *prima facie* objections discussed in Section II) that it is in principle possible to make the transition from our ordinary kinds of knowledge to virtue and to knowledge of the good; another consequence is to indicate that the way to make this transition is to begin by studying nature and what is according to nature, to watch the stable and harmonious way that Zeus manages the universe, and then from this knowledge to discern what we ourselves might most rationally do.³⁶

³⁶ See Cicero TTD III, 2 for the ideal of a course of education laid down by nature (which, in the world as it is, is frequently interrupted and corrupted by the false opinions, about the good or about what human actions are appropriate, that we pick up from human society). It is this ideal course of education, leading up to virtue and to knowledge of the good, that Cicero is sketching in *De Finibus* III, 16-23. We must first use the impulses that nature has given us to acquire dispositions to appropriate actions, i.e., to selection of *τὰ κατὰ φύσιν*:

The Stoic conception of physics as a practical virtue is closely bound up with their conception of Zeus' activity; and here the contrast with Aristotle is sharpest. The Stoics and Aristotle agree that the contemplation of God is a sufficient condition for us to live well; but for the Stoics, contemplating God is contemplating God at work in the world, and leads us to contemplate what God contemplates, to value what God values, and to act in the same way that God acts. Both Aristotle and the Stoics, in inheriting Plato's claim that we need knowledge of some special object in order to live the happiest life, also inherit Plato's difficulty about what *ἐργον* this special knowledge will have. Plato wants the knowledge of the Good (or of the Forms in general) to have an *ἔργον* beyond communicating the knowledge to someone else: the most plausible story is that the philosopher-king, or the demurge, is producing an imitation of the Forms. But it is notoriously vague in what sense a particular arrangement of changing things imitates a Form; Plato tries to explain that the Good is the One, and that the goodness of other things derives from oneness or number; but it requires artificial and slippery argument, which Aristotle exposes mercilessly, to make this fit any particular case. Aristotle's solution is to give up, and to admit that although knowledge of God (or of the Good-itself) is intrinsically desirable, it has no practical consequences. The knowledge of God can give a rule for our actions, Aristotle says, but not by *telling us what to do*, as if it were a practical art; instead, the purely practical virtue of *φρόνησις* tells us what we must do *in order to contemplate God*: *φρόνησις* rules in the way that the art of medicine rules, but the knowledge of God rules in the way that health rules, as a goal (*EE* VIII 3, 1249b9-13; cp. *EE* V 12 = *EN* VI 12, 1144a3-6, *EE* V

only then, once we have extended and stabilized these dispositions so as to live consistently with nature, does "what can truly be called good begin to be present in us, and begin to be understood," namely in the "the order and harmony of action" (III, 21) consequent on *ἐπιστροφή* of *τὰ κατὰ φύσιν*. By strengthening our *καταλήψεις* of *τὰ κατὰ φύσιν* (which are non-goods) until we have *ἐπιστροφή*, and then reflecting on the knowledge thus attained, we recognize that the knowledge itself, and the actions consequent on it, are good; this gives the Stoics the psychological mechanism that Plato lacks in *Republic* VII to explain how we can make the transition from ordinary knowledge of non-goods to an extraordinary knowledge of the good. The *oikeiōsis*-accounts are not *arguments* designed to show that a certain conclusion (the supremacy of virtue) is *necessary*, but *narratives* designed to show how a certain process (becoming virtuous) might be *possible*. I intend to discuss the structure and function of the *oikeiōsis*-accounts at greater length elsewhere.

13 = *EN* VI 13, 1145a6-11). "For God is not a ruler by giving orders [*ἐπιτακτικῶς*], but he is that for the sake of which *φρόνησις* gives orders [*ἐπιτάττει*]—we have distinguished elsewhere two senses of 'for the sake of which' [sc. 'to benefit whom' and 'to attain which']—for he is not in need of anything [sc. and therefore cannot be benefitted, so something can be 'for the sake of God' only as 'to attain (the contemplation etc. of) God']. So whatever choice and possession of natural goods (whether goods of the body, or wealth, or friends, or any other goods) will most produce contemplation of God, that is the best, and this is the noblest standard; but whatever [choice of natural goods] obstructs the service and contemplation of God, either by deficiency or by excess, that is bad" (*EE* VIII 3, 1249b13-19).³⁷ Here "service and contemplation of God" is simply a rhetorical way of saying "contemplation of God"; for Aristotle has made it clear that the only way to serve his God is to contemplate him.³⁸

For the Stoics, Aristotle's solution to the problem of the *ἔργον* of wisdom means giving up the basic motive of the Platonic search for wisdom, namely that we need some special knowledge in order to manage our lives (and our cities) well. Aristotelian *σοφία* does not solve our old problems, but simply gives us a new craving for contemplation. But from the Stoic point of view, what is perhaps worst about Aristotle's solution is not what it says about us, but what it says about God: for *σοφία* does not direct God to action in the world, any more

³⁷ Aristotle distinguishes the two senses of "for the sake of which" [*τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα*], namely "to benefit whom" [*τὸ ᾧ*] and "to attain which" [*τὸ οὗ*], at *Metaph.* Δ 7, 1072b1-3; something unchangeable, like a god, cannot be *τὸ ᾧ* but only *τὸ οὗ*. In *τῆν τοῦ θεοῦ θεωρίαν* at *EE* VII 3, 1249b17, *θεοῦ* is objective genitive. The emendations adopted by Walzer and Mingay in the OCT (*τῆν τοῦ θεοῦ θεωρίαν* into *τῆν τοῦ θείου θεωρίαν* at b17, and *τὸν θεὸν θεωρεῖται* into *τὸ ἐν ἡμῶν θεῶν θεωρεῖται* and *θεωρεῖται* at b20) are bizarre and must be rejected.

³⁸ When Posidonius says that the *τέλος* is "to live contemplating the truth and order of the universe, and cooperating in constructing it according to our ability, not being led in any respect by the irrational part of the soul" (Fr. 186 Edelstein-Kidd [from Clement]), he is echoing this passage of Aristotle (Aristotle goes on to say, just after the sentence cited, "it is thus in the soul, and this is the best standard for the soul, when it least perceives the irrational part of the soul as such"). When Posidonius says that in addition to contemplating the cosmos, we must also "cooperate in constructing it" [*συνκατασκευάζειν*], he may be deliberately modifying Aristotle; but it looks as if he has simply misunderstood what Aristotle meant by *θεωρεῖται*, taking it to be more than merely

than it does a human being; and while human beings must act in order to attain the contemplation of God, God need do nothing at all in order to contemplate himself. The problems of the circularity and the *ἔργον* of virtue recur for Aristotle as the problems of the circularity and the *ἔργον* of God. Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere, both Aristotle's God and Plato's demurge just are the virtue of wisdom, existing separately by itself (see Menn 1992, Menn 1995); so it is natural that the difficulties about virtue should recur as theological difficulties. Plato tries to explain that the demurge has (or is) knowledge of Forms superior to himself, including the Form of the Good, and that his *ἔργον* is to imitate them in the sensible world; but he has no clear account either of what the Form of the Good would be (or, if it is the One, of why it would be good) or of how knowing it would lead to any particular action. Aristotle's solution is to admit that the separate Good is just wisdom, and that this wisdom is just knowledge of the Good, i.e., that it is just knowledge of itself; and that this knowledge aims at no further *ἔργον* beyond knowing itself. Aristotle's God is thus under the same suspicion of vacuous circularity as Aristotle's virtue. The Stoic solutions to the problems of circularity and of the *ἔργον* of virtue are solutions in theology as much as in ethics. Aristotle assumes that, since God must be the best kind of knowledge, he must be knowledge of the best object (namely himself); Aristotle also assumes that since God already has (and is) the highest good simply by knowing himself, he will have no motivation to any practical action. The Stoics can agree that Zeus has (and, if you like, is) the highest good and the best kind of knowledge; but this good knowledge is not only knowledge of the good, but also knowledge of the *κατὰ φύσιν*, which are neither good nor bad; and, just because Zeus already securely possesses the highest good, and has no further needs to satisfy, he is free to act as his knowledge of the *κατὰ φύσιν* bids him, that is, to create the universe, and also to create rational beings in it, and to teach them his knowledge. Human beings are inferior to gods only in that we are born without this knowledge, and must struggle to attain it; but once we have it, it is the beginning and not the end of our proper *ἔργον* in the world, which is to live as Zeus

lives, not only "contemplating the truth and order of the universe" but also "cooperating in constructing it according to our ability."³⁹

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