

God and Cosmos in Stoicism

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At the conference, most of the discussion centred on highly technical issues and I am grateful to the respondents of the papers—Juan Pablo Bermúdez, Laura Gómez, Enrique Hulsz, Luis Xavier López Farjeat, Andrea Lozano, Alejandro Tellkamp, and Héctor Zagal—for their help. I am also indebted to Thomas Bénatouil, Marcelo Boeri, Brad Inwood, Andrea Lozano, Susan Meyer, and Teresa Rodríguez for their advice on the subsequent editorial work and their comments on the Introduction. The two anonymous readers appointed by Oxford University Press also provided encouraging and useful comments on the volume as a whole and on each of the individual papers, including the Introduction. The assistance and help received from Peter Momtchiloff, Victoria Patton, Tessa Eaton, and Catherine Berry at Oxford has also been extremely valuable.

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Does Cosmic Nature Matter?

Some Remarks on the Cosmological Aspects of Stoic Ethics

Marcelo D. Boeri

1. INTRODUCTION: MAKING ROOM FOR COSMOLOGICAL ETHICS

Cosmological ethics is a fascinating idea. It presupposes that universal nature and our own natures have something in common, that cosmic nature has a rational structure (or is the same as universal reason) and our natures—which, according to Chrysippus, are microcosmic instances of universal nature insofar as our natures are *parts* of it—have such a structure as well. This idea also assumes that our practical life has something to do with universal nature as long as universal nature can have a normative character that works as a criterion for moral action, and that human reason, in being an instance of universal reason and thereby akin to it, is able to know universal reason and to consider events from a universal reason viewpoint. Cosmological ethics is also an approach that strongly relies on the ability of human reason to know the whole system of the world, and that assumes that human beings have a special place in such a system. Nowadays many people are inclined to sympathize with ecologist movements; the Stoic recommendation of living in agreement with nature in order to attain a smooth flow of life, therefore, should sound appealing and reasonable to those who are willing to support the ecologist agenda. However, to live in accordance with nature in Stoic terms is more than just being a sympathizer with the ecological

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movement. Being a Stoic follower of nature involves a serious effort to know the way the cosmos works and to enquire into the probable place that one, as a privileged part of cosmic nature, should occupy in it. It also involves being able to consider oneself as part of a whole and to understand what happens to oneself as a particular event in the life of the whole, no matter that in the short term a particular fact or situation of one's life appears to be inconvenient or painful.

In recent years there has been a debate concerning whether or not Stoic ethics does depend on claims about cosmic nature. Some scholars have defended the thesis that Stoic ethics should be considered free from cosmic nature (and, therefore, as not dependent on providential cosmology; I shall call this interpretation 'the heterodox view').¹ Others have argued heavily for the respectability and reasonableness of the cosmic viewpoint in Stoic ethics (I shall call this position 'the orthodox view').² For the reasons I will be giving in what follows I tend to believe that the latter view is the correct one, not only due to the overwhelming number of texts where it is explicitly stated that cosmic nature should be taken into account, but also because of Stoic philosophical 'holism'. Such a 'holistic' conception of philosophy takes for granted that all the parts of philosophy (ethics, physics, and logic) are so interrelated with each other that, to some extent, no part can be considered independently of the others. This approach of philosophy contributes to making the idea of a cosmological ethics understandable, and accounts for the fact that the Stoics took the role of universal nature in the specification of the human end to be reasonable (see DL 7. 87–8). In fact, if all the parts of philosophy are interrelated and no part can be considered independently of the others, it should not be odd (at least for a Stoic) to find ingredients belonging to cosmology within the domain of ethics. The oddity of this kind of assertion, though, is what has led some distinguished interpreters of Stoicism (like Julia Annas) to assume that the idea itself of a cosmological ethics is hard to believe, since it 'does lead us . . . to accept counterintuitive conclusions such as that nothing but vice is bad, and that emotions like regret are all mistaken'.³ However, this sort of apparently paradoxical thesis is what the Stoics explicitly argued for; if this is so, one should try to avoid one's Humean assumptions in interpreting Stoic ethics. Otherwise, one could not assess properly the scope of views that sound counterintuitive to a modern mind, but not necessarily to an ancient Stoic mind.⁴ Nevertheless, it should be recalled that a number of Stoic theses were weird even to some

¹ Notably Engberg-Pedersen 1986: 145–83, at 149–50; 1990: 40–2; Annas 1993: 160–5; more recently Irwin 2003: 346, and again Annas 2007.

² Representative scholars of this view are Long 1996a: 134–55, at 135–47; 1996b: 85–106, at 101–3. Inwood 1985: 212–15; Cooper 1999: 427–48, at 439–44; Betegh 2003: 273–302, at 274, 276, 290–293, 298–9.

³ Annas 2007: 69–70.

⁴ For a different approach see, in addition to Annas's work, Brad Inwood's remarks in Ch. 8 below. Inwood's view, though, is very nuanced since, although he maintains that few people—both ancient and modern—'think it sound to hold that learning cosmology will actually help us deal

ancient philosophers; but one might reasonably suspect that this is due to the fact that the Stoic starting points and general assumptions were different from those of the Platonic and Aristotelian philosophers who found weird the Stoic approaches to particular issues. No matter how counterintuitive or outrageous a Stoic thesis may sound: outrageousness or to posit tenets that are at odds with the common conceptions (to use Plutarch's expression) were never reasonable criteria for assessing a philosophical theory.

Now despite the fact that the Stoics appear to endorse the assertion that a happy life and a real human life requires understanding the way the cosmos works and the place that humans, as privileged parts of cosmic nature, should occupy, it is far from being clear, in my view, in what manner an understanding of the cosmos would contribute to performing rational actions and living a rational life, which is the same as living according to nature. In this chapter I wish to investigate the aforementioned relevance of the claims about cosmic nature for ethics in connection with the general conception of reality the Stoics had. In addition to arguing in favour of the relevance that the cosmic viewpoint has for early Stoic ethics, I would like to suggest that the cosmic perspective is relevant for Stoic ethics for systematic reasons related to the conception the Stoics have of philosophy. As far as I know, the role of cosmic nature in late Stoicism (of Epictetus and, particularly, of Marcus Aurelius) has never been questioned. To put it roughly, in Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius philosophy begins by pointing out the basic problem of the relationship between human being and the universe, and reaches an ethical affirmation where the reference of the human life to the cosmos is crucial.⁵ This kind of Stoicism traces the course of cosmic events back to a 'cosmic will' with ethical aims, and claims that human beings must be subordinated to the cosmic will, of which they are a part. What I want to argue here is that both Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, when speaking of the role of cosmic nature for ethics, are following a doctrine already present in and advanced by the older Stoics.⁶

with personal grief', he also argues for the seriousness of the respectable *intellectual* necessity of physics in Stoicism (see esp. p. 203; his emphasis).

⁵ I am thinking of passages like Marcus Aurelius 9. 1, where injustice is explained as an impious act on account of the fact that universal nature (*ἡ τῶν ὅλων φύσις*) has constituted rational animals for the sake of one another, to help one another 'according to their deserts' (*κατ' ἀξίαν*). So, the one who transgresses the will of nature (*τὸ βούλημα ταύτης*), Marcus argues, is guilty of impiety against the highest divinity. Moreover, in dealing with lies Marcus points out that both the one who lies intentionally and the one who lies unintentionally are guilty of impiety: the former because he acts unjustly by deceiving, the latter inasmuch as he is not in harmony (*διαφωνεῖ*) with universal nature, and inasmuch as he yields disorder (*ἀκοσμεῖ*) in being in conflict (*μαχόμενος*) with the nature of the cosmos. In all these cases a moral failure is seen as a sort of discordance with universal nature.

⁶ To be sure, the theme of a cosmological ethics can sound a little bizarre to our Humean minds. However, as shown by Betegh 2003, and more recently and extensively by Carone (2005: esp. 53–78), it is an issue that was taken seriously by Plato. It seems very clear to me that the Stoics developed Plato's suggestion and took for granted some of his assumptions, such as that reason is

What I have called 'the orthodox view' can have distinct emphases; for instance, although I agree with the general approach of the orthodox view, I shall not endorse the rather extreme claim of A. A. Long—one of the champions of the view—that Stoic ethics is *grounded* in or *parasitical on* Stoic physics.⁷ Annas has given several reasons to reject this sort of foundationalism when understanding Stoic ethics; but the main one is that, if ethics depends upon physics, there would be an important asymmetry between these two parts of philosophy (the former being the *explanandum* and the latter the *explanans*), violating so the 'integrated picture' that all parts of philosophy are mixed and that none of them is preferred (*προκεκρίσθαι*) to any another (DL 7. 40).⁸ But for this very reason one should admit that the thesis of a cosmological ethics is reasonable within the Stoic assumptions of reality, or so I shall argue.⁹ My chapter is divided into two main parts: the first one (sections 2–3) deals with some textual arguments intending to show that some assumptions of what I have called 'the heterodox view' are wrong. The second part (sections 4–5) focuses on what probably is the most problematic point of the cosmological ethics of the Stoics: how the particular tenets of Stoic ethics are related to cosmic nature or, in other words, how some ethical tenets can be somehow connected with our knowledge of cosmic nature.

2. THE PARTS AND THE WHOLE: TURNING TO THE VIEWPOINT OF THE WHOLE

Let me start by quoting in full three well-known passages where the relevance of cosmic nature for ethics in early Stoicism is emphasized:

(A) But since animals have the additional faculty of impulse, through the use of which they go in search of what is appropriate (*τὰ οἰκεία*) to them, what is natural for them is to be administered in accordance to their impulse. And since reason, by way of a more perfect management, has been bestowed on rational beings, to live correctly¹⁰ in

regarded as being a sort of divinity in us (see Plato, *Timaeus* 90a2–4, where it is maintained that 'the most important' part of our soul (*τὸ δὲ δὴ περὶ τοῦ κυριωτάτου παρ' ἡμῖν ψυχῆς εἶδος*), which is a god's gift, is our *δαίμων*; see also 90c5–6: the person who keeps 'well-ordered the *δαίμων* dwelling in himself is entirely happy'). In the first part of Ch. 8, Inwood concludes that the idea that 'there is a single, general Stoic view on the question of the role played by physics should probably be shelved' (see p. 206). Although I agree with him that it is hard to determine a *single* or *general* Stoic view on the role played by physics in Stoic ethics, my chapter can be taken as a modest attempt to account for the *probable* role of physics in Stoic ethics.

⁷ Long 1996c: 179–201; 1968: 341, quoted by Annas 2007: 66.

⁸ Annas 2007: 66–7, 74–5.

⁹ To some extent, this is taken into account by Annas (2007: 67–8), but in the nuanced version of the 'orthodox view' I defend in this chapter I take the issue of the mixed Stoic presentation of philosophy differently from Long's approach.

¹⁰ Cooper (1999: 439 n. 30) notes the ambiguity with regard to the placement of the adverb *ὀρθῶς*, that might go with *τὸ κατὰ λόγον ζῆν* (this interpretation) or with *γίνεσθαι*.

accordance with reason comes to be natural for them. For reason supervenes as the craftsman of impulse.¹¹ Therefore Zeno in his book *On the Nature of Man* was the first to say that living in agreement with nature¹² is the end, which is living in accordance with virtue. For nature leads us towards virtue. Similarly Cleanthes . . . , Posidonius and Hecaton. Further, living in accordance with virtue is equivalent to living in accordance with experience of what happens by nature, as Chrysippus says in *On Ends* book 1: for our natures are parts of the nature of the whole. Therefore, living in agreement with nature (*τὸ ἀκολουθῶν τῇ φύσει ζῆν*) comes to be the end, which is in accordance with the nature of oneself and that of the whole (*κατὰ τε τὴν αὐτοῦ καὶ κατὰ τὴν τῶν ὅλων*), engaging in no activity wont to be forbidden by the universal law (*ὁ νόμος ὁ κοινός*), which is the right reason pervading everything and identical to Zeus, who is this director of the administration of existing things. And the virtue of the happy man and his good flow of life are just this: always doing everything on the basis of the concordance (*συμφωνία*) of each man's guardian spirit (*δαίμων*) with the will (*βούλησις*)¹³ of the administrator of the whole. . . . The nature consequential upon which one ought to live is taken by Chrysippus to be both the common and, particularly, the human. But Cleanthes admits only the common nature, as that which one ought to follow, and no longer also the particular. (DL 7. 86–9; tr. Long and Sedley, LS 57A and 63C)

(B) They also say that the whole virtue, which is related to the human being, and happiness is a consistent (*ἀκόλουθος*) and concordant (*ὁμολογουμένη*) life by nature. And Zeno characterized the end thus: living in concordance (*ὁμολογουμένως*), that is, living according to a single and harmonic (*σύμφωνον*) reason, since those who live in conflict [with reason] are miserable. (Stob. *Ecl.* 2. 75. 8–76. 1, ed. Wachsmuth; my tr.)

(C) It is not possible to discover any other beginning of justice or any source for it other than that from Zeus and from the universal nature (*κοινὴ φύσις*), for thence everything of the kind must have its beginning if we are going to have anything to say about good and evil. . . . For there is no other or more suitable way (*οἰκειότερον*) of approaching the theory (*λόγος*) of good and evil or the virtues or happiness [than] from the universal nature and the dispensation of the universe (*κόσμος*). . . . For the theory of good and evil must be connected with these, since good and evil have no better beginning or point of reference and physical speculation (*φυσικὴ θεωρία*) is to be undertaken for no

¹¹ This is the final section of the classic passage for the study of *οἰκείωσις* in Stoicism (DL 7. 85–6). Note that the word *οἰκείωσις* does not appear in the passage at stake, although distinct verbal forms of *οἰκείω* (*οἰκεύουσιν*, *οἰκεῖσθαι*) do occur.

¹² According to Stobaeus' testimony, Zeno would have said that the end is simply 'living in agreement', and Cleanthes, Zeno's successor as head of the school, would have extended this formulation into 'living in agreement with nature' (see Stob. *Ecl.* 2. 75. 11–76. 8, ed. Wachsmuth; included in LS 63B).

¹³ It might be possible to render *βούλησις* by 'wish'. In fact, for the Stoics *βούλησις* is a peculiar type of desire, i.e. 'reasonable desire' (*εὐλογος ὄρεξις*; Stob. *Ecl.* 2. 87. 21–2; at this point the Stoics seem to be following Aristotle; cf. *De Anima*, 414b2, 432b5–6, 433a26–7). In the case of Aristotle it is pretty clear that desire, when related to the rational part of the soul, is *βούλησις*, while when related to the irrational part it is *ἐπιθυμία* or *θυμός*. For the Stoics *βούλησις* is the kind of desire that is experienced by the sage person (actually, it is one of the three *εὐπάθειαι*, along with *χαρά* and *ἐυλάβεια*), the one whose soul is rationally disposed as a whole. For the evidence see DL 7. 116 (SVF 3. 431; LS 65F) and Plutarch, *De Stoic. Repug.* 1037f–1038a (SVF 3. 175; cf. LS 53R), who advances the idea that the sages' reason is not different from the law (presumably, the universal law).

other purpose than for the discrimination (διάστασις) of good and evil. According to Chrysippus, then, physical theory turns out to be 'at once before and behind' ethics, or rather the whirligig of the arrangement is utterly bewildering if the former must be placed after the latter, no part of which can be grasped without it. (Plutarch, *De Stoicorum Repugnantiis* 1035c–d, tr. Cherniss)

One might arguably say that interpretations where the claims about cosmic nature play a significant role for ethics depend upon passage A. It is the letter of presentation of the Stoic naturalism as well as of Stoic cosmological ethics insofar as it suggests why human practical life requires knowledge of both physics and theology. Physics is important in order to know the manner in which the cosmos (or nature) works; but theology is also relevant as long as the Stoics maintained that, in a sense, the cosmos is god himself peculiarly qualified (ιδίως ποιόν) consisting of the whole substance.¹⁴ Apart from this, theology, a branch of physics according to the Stoics, is important because the agent must make an effort to understand the will of Zeus, in accordance with which his own daemon should be in order to have a 'smooth flow of life'. As indicated by passage B, virtue is a consistent and harmonic life by nature, this suggesting the Stoic worry about emphasizing both the internal concordance (i.e. concordance or harmony with oneself) and the external concordance (i.e. concordance or harmony with the whole), a point on which Cleanthes especially insists in his *Hymn to Zeus*.¹⁵ To be sure, the thesis that cosmic nature plays a significant role for ethics seems to have been assumed by Posidonius as well. In fact, he appears to have held that only the φυσικός can grasp the structure of the universe and be an αἰτιολογικός in the strict sense, inasmuch as he is the only one who knows the way in which all the parts of the universe are interrelated.¹⁶ 'Just as light, Posidonius says when interpreting Plato's *Timaeus*, is apprehended by sight which is luminous, and voice by hearing which is airy, so too the nature of the whole (ἡ τῶν ὅλων φύσις) should be apprehended by the reason which is akin to it' (ὑπὸ συγγενοῦς τοῦ λόγου; my translation).¹⁷ As is plain from another Posidonius passage, the reason which is akin to the nature of the whole is clearly 'the daemon which is akin (συγγενὲς δαίμων) and has a nature which is similar to [the daemon] that rules the whole world'.¹⁸ Within the context, what

Posidonius endeavours to show is that the cause of emotional states—which are understood as being 'discord', 'lack of homology' (ἀνομολογία)—lies in the fact that human beings do not follow their daemon, i.e. the reason present in the human soul which is akin to universal reason. It doesn't matter that the Stoic Aristo of Chios was intent on proving that physical matters were beyond us insofar as they cannot be known and contribute no benefit.¹⁹ It does not matter either that Panaetius, when declaring divination to be unreal (ἀνυπόστατος) and implying his doubt on the causal power of providence,²⁰ was willing to put into doubt the cosmic sympathy and, thereby, the role of cosmic nature for ethics. If both Aristo and Panaetius question the relevance of physics or of providential cosmic nature (and hence the relevance of physics and cosmic nature for ethics), it is because those theses were maintained and defended by some members in the school. This being so, we have both evidence for early (Zeno, Cleanthes, and Chrysippus) and middle Stoicism (Posidonius) that the Stoics were interested in emphasizing the relevance of cosmic nature for ethics.

There are several topics in passage A that must be noted.

- (i) If for irrational animals what is according to nature is what is according to impulse (and so they 'have to' live according to impulse),²¹ and for humans what is according to nature is what is rational, it follows that human beings, in order to have a real human life, *ought to* live rationally, since this is a way to fulfil their inner nature.
- (ii) Given that our human nature coincides with reason, and living is a practical activity, it seems plausible that for humans living according to nature is living according to virtue. In fact, virtue is the best thing we can attain at the practical level.
- (iii) We, like the rest of living beings, have a sort of tendency to accomplish our own nature; that is why nature leads us to virtue, because being a virtuous

Alesse 1994: 256–7). Even accepting Alesse's view that Posidonius' focus is on the rational part of the soul, the bulk of Posidonius' homology continues to be in the divine, which is the pattern of the correct behaviour. I am not convinced by Alesse's contention, since her interpretation neglects the emphasis upon the contrast 'nature of the whole—reason which is akin to us' (in Frag. 85, ed. EK).

¹⁹ Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 15. 62. 7–11 (SVF 1. 353).

²⁰ DL 7. 149 (test. 139, ed. Alesse); Epiphanius, *De Fide* 9. 45 (test. 134, ed. Alesse = Frag. 68 ed. Van Straaten). On the meaning of the adjective ἀνυπόστατος applied to divination see Alesse, 1997: 270, who argues that the term, common in sceptical refutations, suggests that Panaetius applied ἐποχή to divination. This probably means that, for Panaetius, divination is not an existent (ὄν), but a subsistent item (ὑφιστάμενον).

²¹ This expression is potentially misleading insofar as it is a natural fact (not a requirement or a duty) that animals live according to their impulse. There is no doubt that nature in animals has not the same normative character as in humans (in the sense of fulfilling a duty), since living in accordance with impulse is what animals do, and this does not imply any kind of effort to fit into what they *have* to do. But in the case of animals one might understand the 'to have to' in a wide normative sense, i.e. without assuming that such 'to have' means fitting into an actual norm, so to speak, since 'living in accordance with impulse' is something that nature has disposed and established as well. I am grateful to Thomas Bénatouil for urging me to clarify this point.

¹⁴ DL 7. 137; Stob. *Ecl.* 1. 184. 8 ss. ed. Wachsmuth = SVF 2. 527.

¹⁵ See *Hymn to Zeus*, vv. 20–1: 'For thus you have fitted together (συνήρμοκας) all good things with the bad, so that there is one eternal rational principle (λόγος) for them all' (tr. Inwood-Gerson). The most detailed and recent work I know about Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus* is the paper by Thom 2001: 477–99.

¹⁶ Frag. 254 (= DL 7. 132–3), ed. Theiler; see also Frag 18 (= Simplicius, *In Aristotelis Phy.* 291. 21–292. 31), ed. EK.

¹⁷ Frag. 85, ed. EK.

¹⁸ Frag. 187. 7–8, ed. EK. Alesse argues that homology in Posidonius is just the coherence with the best part of the soul (i.e. the rational part), as far as it stands for the divine element in us. Hence Posidonius' way of understanding the moral end would keep the Stoic notion of coherence in a different manner from the one in which such a coherence was understood by early Stoicism (see

agent is to realize one's own nature (this point is explained by Musonius Rufus, Frag. 17 Hense, briefly discussed below in section 3). At this point, in connection with the assertion that nature drives us to virtue, I would like to mention briefly one issue that turns out to be relevant to the heterodox view, namely, that neither Sextus Empiricus nor Stobaeus, two important sources for Stoic ethics, give importance to cosmic nature.²² It should be noted, though, that at least in Stobaeus' extract of Stoic ethics two important references to nature could be found (probably meaning 'cosmic nature') in ethical context. Stobaeus, probably citing the first century BC Stoic philosopher Arius Didymus, argues that the end of all the virtues consists in living in agreement with nature (*τὸ ἀκολουθῶν τῇ φύσει ζῆν*, the same expression we find at passage A to make reference to universal nature), for the human being from nature possesses inclinations (*ἀφορμαὶ παρὰ τῆς φύσεως*) for discovering what is appropriate. And each virtue, in concordantly performing (*τὸ σύμφωνον πράττουσα*) what is appropriate, makes the agent live in consistency with nature.²³ As far as I can see, the most natural way to understand this passage is as a slightly different version of the formula of the end ('living in agreement with nature'). It is arguable that the human being from nature possesses inclinations for discovering what is appropriate because nature is taken to be a criterion of what is appropriate, this criterion being both our own nature—which can mirror universal nature—and universal nature, of which our natures are parts and on which they depend. This view is not new in Greek philosophy at the moment the Stoics take it as theirs; Plato had already employed the account of the whole and the parts while arguing that the powers and properties of the parts are explained by reference to the whole (not vice versa). Even though Plato does not explicitly maintain that the whole universe is a *criterion* for morality, he does emphasize that the universe is the point of reference with respect of which the parts acquire their value and reality (see *Philebus* 29b–33a; cf. also *Timaeus* 90b1–d7). Finally, Plato himself might have inspired the Stoic thesis that the human being from nature possesses inclinations for discovering what is appropriate; in fact, in *Philebus* 21b6–8 he contends that if someone should choose what is not really good, he would do so unwillingly (from ignorance or necessity) and against what is by nature truly choiceworthy, implying this way that there is a tendency towards what is really good, which agrees with one's reason.

- (iv) If living according to nature means living according to both one's own nature and the nature of the whole (to the extent that our natures, as

Chrysippus says, are parts of the nature of the whole), and if our actions must be performed following what universal law indicates that it should be done, then, universal law (which is universal nature), by saying what should be done and what should not be done, becomes a practical criterion of our actions. The heterodox view attempts to establish that the idea that we are simple parts of a larger whole properly belongs to the late Stoicism of Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus.²⁴ But, as becomes clear from passage A,²⁵ the emphasis on the fact that we are parts of a larger whole is already present in Chrysippus and, if Galen is to be believed (in Posidonius Frag. 187, EK), it was also present in Posidonius, a long time before the later Stoics. It sounds more natural to consider Marcus Aurelius' and Epictetus' continuous remarks with regard to us as being 'parts of a whole' like developments inspired by Chrysippus' doctrine.

- (v) Finally, if virtue and happiness consist in performing everything in concordance with each one's daemon and with the will of the administrator of the universe, and if we effectively can reach that concordance or harmony, it seems that the Stoics are suggesting that human beings have the possibility of sharing the perfect rationality and happiness of god.²⁶ If that is the case, it would also be natural to attain the understanding of all events from a cosmic viewpoint, a thesis manifestly present in later Stoicism²⁷ but also significantly advanced by some early Stoics. If Plutarch is to be trusted, Chrysippus was willing to claim that some apparent evils, if more closely examined, can be seen as goods. So, when cities are too populous, people are moved to the colonies or a war against someone is initiated; so Chrysippus seems to have maintained that 'god gives occasions for destruction to begin' (Plut. *De Stoic. Rep.* 1049b; tr. Cherniss); such a destruction, however, is contemplated in the 'economy' of the whole and, in this sense, it involves a beneficial result. What we should do, then, is to move from the perspective of the part to the perspective of the whole; this is exactly what understanding the administration of the universe means and, as passage A shows, bringing one's own daemon (i.e. each one's own reason) into agreement with the

²⁴ Annas 1993: 162.

²⁵ Quoted and commented on by Annas 1993: 160. She does not make, though, a detailed commentary on Chrysippus' assertion that our natures are parts of the nature of the whole; she just says that this thesis is common to later Stoicism, and that in the early versions of Stoic ethics the strategies that are derived directly from the idea that we are parts of a larger whole 'are conspicuously absent' (162). Passage A, though, part of which content can reasonably be attributed to Chrysippus, seems to prove the opposite.

²⁶ The Stoics say neither that human beings can share the rationality of god nor that they can be happy like gods. They rather say that the *sage* people's happiness does not differ from the divine happiness of Zeus; Chrysippus appears to have suggested that 'momentary' (*ἀμερταία*) happiness does not differ from the happiness of Zeus, and that the happiness of Zeus is not more choiceworthy (*αἰρετωτέρα*) or more venerable (*σεμνότερα*) than that of wise people (see Stob. *Ecl.* 2. 98. 19–99. 2; ed. Wachsmuth).

²⁷ Marcus Aurelius 8. 46, 5. 8.

²² Cf. Annas 1993: 160 n. 4.

²³ Stob. *Ecl.* 2. 65. 11–17 (ed. Wachsmuth). It sounds a little odd to say 'the end of all these virtues' (*Πασῶν δὲ τούτων τῶν ἀρετῶν τὸ τέλος*; 65. 11–12; as pointed out by Long 1983: 63 n. 12). The more promising meaning of this stance is that exercising virtues brings about living according to nature for humans.

will of the manager of the universe. In Epictetus' words this is 'the system in which men and gods are associated' (*Diss.* 1. 9. 4), a rational structure where all the oppositions (including virtue and vice, abundance and dearth) are for the sake of the harmony of the universe (1. 12. 16).²⁸ But the issue of turning to the perspective of the whole also goes back to Cleanthes (*Hymn to Zeus*, vv. 11–22), this proving that the recommendation of turning to the perspective of the whole was a tenet originally conceived of in early Stoicism, and developed and deepened by late Stoicism.²⁹

Passage A also shows why in the Stoic view, or rather in the Chrysippean view, there is not a significant difference between our natures and the universal nature; this is also the reason why I think that the Stoics took the universal law to be *not* something alien or external to us³⁰ but, on the contrary, something that peculiarly belongs to us as rational beings. In the *scala naturae* that text A presents (see especially DL 7. 85–6), starting out from the plants and ending up with humans, reason appears as the peculiar component of humans which enables them to control their impulses, to the extent that reason is added to us 'as a craftsman of impulse' (DL 7. 86). I consider that this can be understood as the possibility humans have to moderate their impulses and to retard the satisfaction of some appetite. Indeed this is to act rationally, because reason in us is, like the cosmos, a mark of order, and for a human being to retard the satisfaction of a desire or even to remove some irrational desire are specific marks of rationality. Reason, as a craftsman of our impulses, models such impulses and helps the agent to avoid developing 'excessive impulses'.

3. EARLY AND LATE STOICISM ON THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE WHOLE

As we have seen, Chrysippus claimed that we are microcosmic parts of universal nature, and if we are portions of universal nature, our natures must be akin to universal nature as well.³¹ That we are akin to universal nature can be inferred, I submit, from passage A quoted above; but the thesis that there is a certain affinity between human beings and the rational order of cosmos is also explicitly suggested

by one important source reporting on the Stoic notions of god and cosmos. When distinguishing different meanings of the word *κόσμος* according to the Stoics, Eusebius (probably quoting the first-century BC Stoic Arius Didymus) says that the cosmos can be understood as the dwelling (*οἰκητήριον*) of gods and human beings, and as the structure (*σύστημα*) composed of gods and human beings, and of those things that come into being for the sake of them. Just as a city is said to be twofold, the argument runs, the dwelling as well as the structure composed of those who dwell there along with the citizens, so too the cosmos is like a city constituted out of gods and human beings, the former being those who hold the leadership and the latter those who are subordinated to that leadership. But between them 'there is a reciprocal community (or even an 'affinity'; *κοινωνία*) on account of the fact that they take part in reason, which is natural law' (*κοινωνίαν δ' ὑπάρχειν πρὸς ἀλλήλους διὰ τὸ λόγου μετέχειν, ὅς ἐστι φύσει νόμος*).³²

In my view, it is pretty clear that both in passage A and in the Eusebius passage just quoted some tenets that became common in Marcus Aurelius' and in Epictetus' late Stoicism are plainly established. There are particularly three connected assertions that were especially significant in the cosmic nature's viewpoint for ethics in Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus, and that are already present in the sources reporting early Stoicism: (i) the thesis that our natures are parts of the universal nature, (ii) that human nature and universal nature share certain affinity, and (iii) that there must be a certain concordance or harmony (*συμφωνία*) between each individual's daemon and the will of Zeus. Marcus Aurelius repeats many times the dependence of our natures (as parts) upon the universal nature, but an emblematic passage for this statement in Marcus is the following:

This must you always remember: what is the nature of the whole, what is my own nature, and how my own nature is related to that, *and what kind of a part it is of what kind of a whole* (*ὅποιόν τι μέρος οποιού του ὅλου οὔσα*), and remember that there is no one who is able to prevent you from always acting and saying those things that are consistent with nature, of which you are a part (*τὰ ἀκόλουθα τῇ φύσει, ἧς μέρος εἶ*). (2. 9; my tr.)

The topic of harmony or concordance between the personal daemon and the will of Zeus is also clear in Marcus when he argues that the particular nature must be in tune with the universal nature provided that they are the same.³³

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²⁹ Cleanthes' *Hymn* is not taken into account by Annas when she argues that the thesis that we are parts of a larger whole (and thereby the recommendation that we should turn to the perspective of the whole) belongs to late Stoicism.

³⁰ As Annas thinks (1993: 160–2). In this sense, I would subscribe to J. M. Cooper's claim that 'Zeus's or nature's law is our law, too, the law of human beings as such'; 'Once we recognize and take seriously our own rationality . . . we should see ourselves as bound by this law' (2004: 212–13).

³¹ For the Platonic antecedent of this view see Plato's *Timaeus*, where it is argued that we are wholes (33a), that the cosmos is a whole (32d), and that both we and the animals are parts of the cosmos (30c).

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The topic of god within us—an issue which is Platonic in character³⁴—is also present in Epictetus, when he states that Zeus has assigned to each person a tutor (ἐπίτροπος, i.e. his own personal daemon, who is his personal guardian). Now what I would like to emphasize once more is that, taking into account the passages just cited, we have good reason to suspect that these developments are not original to Epictetus or Marcus Aurelius; a more reasonable approach to this topic would be, it does seem to me, to assume that they took into consideration passages like text A and that they draw on the early Stoics' theses. Not only is the terminology quite similar, but also the bulk of the argument: (1) universal nature and particular natures are common and the same in substance; (2) if universal nature is rational and depicts order, we ought to be rational and depict order; (3) our rationality is a 'gift' given by Zeus, and constitutes a sort of 'inward divinity' (δαίμων) dwelling in us that must be our ruler and guidance.³⁵

Let me turn now to passage C, where unequivocally it is stressed the relevance that cosmic nature had for Chrysippus as a starting point when investigating moral matters; this passage also emphasizes the importance of engaging in physics when one intends to deal with matters regarding good and evil. So physics looks like an important discipline when doing ethics. Annas quotes the passage and, following Brunschwig, argues that 'the quotations come from *physical*, not *ethical* treatises', from which she infers that cosmic nature has a role, although not as part of ethical theory.³⁶ But this remark does not account for the strong emphasis put by Chrysippus both on universal nature and on physical theory as starting points for knowing good and bad, the virtues, and happiness. In her new paper on Stoic ethics Annas continues to maintain that this passage does not provide evidence for the claim that Stoic physics is foundational for Stoic ethics (a view that, as indicated at the outset of this chapter, I find reasonable), but now she emphasizes the fact that Plutarch can be pulling passages out of context and that what one should think is that Chrysippus is writing works that mix physics and ethics for pedagogical purposes. This being so, then, we may be certain that 'there was no such established thing as *the* way to present Stoic ethics'.³⁷ It does seem to me that Annas is entirely successful in showing that we should rely on the 'integrated picture' (her expression) of Stoic philosophy rather than on a picture where ethics heavily depends on physics. At any rate, I think that the Plutarch passage is suggesting much more than a mere *order of presentation* of philosophical topics. According to Annas, the emphasis on physics should be understood just as a matter of presentation of Stoic ethics; in other words, this is just a way of presenting Stoic ethics, so one should not infer more than that while considering passages such as A, B, and C. Let us look at my passage C and let us take that passage to be one in which Chrysippus

³⁴ Plato, *Phaedo* 107d; *Republic* 617e; *Timaeus* 90b–d; see also n. 6 above.

³⁵ Cf. Marcus Aurelius 5. 27. ³⁶ Annas 1993: 164 (her emphasis).

³⁷ Annas 2007: 79, 82–3, 85.

is just putting emphasis upon one particular order of presentation of ethics. In this case, Chrysippus would be just stressing the physical side as a necessary condition for understanding virtue (like justice in Chrysippus' text), insofar as physical theory is to be undertaken for the sake of discriminating goods and evils. That is, if ethics is presented from the physical perspective, the emphasis on cosmic nature should not be regarded as being the only perspective from which virtue or other ethical items can be grasped. It would be just a matter of emphasis, i.e. the emphasis proper of the part of philosophy from which ethics is being presented. Annas puts emphasis upon the fact that there is a sharp contrast between the presentation of Stoic ethics that makes use of physical considerations and providence, on the one hand, and modern ethical theories, which abjure any such use, on the other hand.³⁸ However, even following her own argument, one should admit that the presentation of Stoic ethics which strongly relies on the cosmic viewpoint was entirely reasonable for the Stoics; that is to say, even admitting with Annas that the presentation of ethics based on physics is *just one way* of presenting ethics, one should take for granted that for the Stoics it is a very reasonable way of presenting it, and it is as reasonable as any other way. Now if this is so, one should probably draw the conclusion that, at least within the physical approach as a means to present Stoic ethics, the use of physical considerations and providence were certainly admissible. Indeed, this point cannot be accepted by any modern approach that rejects even the possibility of considering a providential view of the universe when dealing with ethical matters. A major problem I see in Annas's interpretation is that she (not the Stoics) takes this latter approach to be the *only reasonable* one when dealing with Stoic ethics, so that, in her opinion, the view taking into account the cosmological approach must be dismissed. One point that she stresses in her study is that, although the orthodox view starts by underlining that Stoic ethics must be understood in terms of Stoic physics, and by giving a significant role to a providential view of cosmic nature, such an account ends up by discussing impulse, virtue, emotion, and so on, introducing all the particular topics of Stoic ethics in their own right without appealing to *pneuma* or the cosmos.³⁹ This is an important point in Annas's argument, but it fails to notice the fact that if one takes into consideration the relevance of the cosmological approach to Stoic ethics some apparently counterintuitive Stoic tenets (such as 'nothing but vice is bad' or 'life and health, and their opposites death and disease, are neither good nor bad') become understandable. This is, in fact, the explanation we sometimes find in different Stoic philosophers when they have to account for the apparently counterintuitive thesis that pain, death, and so forth are not evils.⁴⁰ In addition, the approach to Stoic ethics that abjures any physical or providential consideration does not do justice to a Stoic thesis which is closely related to the

³⁸ Ibid. 86.

³⁹ Ibid. 67.

⁴⁰ See Plutarch, *De Stoic. Rep.* 1049b (= SVF 2. 1177), reporting a Chrysippean view.

orthodox view: the stance that universal nature extends to all things, that is, that whatever that comes to be (whether in the whole universe or in any of its parts) necessarily has come to be according to that nature and its reason.⁴¹ On the other hand, I fail to see that Cicero does not present Stoic ethics via cosmic nature in *De Finibus* 3, as Annas insists.⁴² In Cicero's presentation of Stoic ethics there is at least one passage (*De Finibus* 3. 73; I discuss it briefly below) where cosmic nature plays an important role, so that the Cicero passage can be paralleled to my text C.

Now if one follows Annas's suggestion and privileges the integrated picture of the Stoic system and, accordingly, one accepts that some ingredients of physics might be relevant to ethics,⁴³ one still should wonder how this is possible. At least three Stoic sources report that the Stoics think there are three 'most generic' virtues: logic, physics, and ethics, these virtues being the three parts of philosophy.⁴⁴ To our common sense it sounds a little weird that physics could count as a virtue. Physics is a certain kind of knowledge; but this does not suffice to make physics a virtue, since physics is not knowledge of the good.⁴⁵ The Stoics declared virtue to be a certain form of knowledge (i.e. knowledge that can be identified with the knowledge of the good), and in its most technical sense it is a 'consistent disposition' (*διάθεσις ὁμολογουμένη*; DL 7. 89), or a 'consistent disposition of the soul which is coherent with itself with regard to the whole life' (text B). This self-coherence that a virtuous soul must have is explained on account of the fact that happiness, the Stoics claim, resides in virtue, since virtue is a soul that has been made for the sake of 'homology' (*ὁμολογία*) of one's whole life. In other words, without coherence or agreement, there is no happiness, which is the same as saying that without coherence there is not a real rational life. Now if the insistence on having a consistent life is so strong, it is reasonable to assume that human beings have, for the most part, a life that is not in agreement with nature. As suggested by Cleanthes, the human being is the only one who is capable of disregarding the law and, in doing so, he leads his own life against his own nature. Everlasting reason—or simply god, from whom we humans 'have obtained by lot an imitation of god'⁴⁶—Cleanthes claims, is what 'the wicked flee from and neglect, ill-fated, since they always long for the possession of good things and do not see the common law of god, nor do they hear it; and if they

obeyed it sensibly (*ὀν νῶ*) they would have a good life (*βίος ἐσθλός*).⁴⁷ In a similar vein, Seneca points out that good can be present only where there is reason, or rather, where there is a perfectly developed reason. Man's good is not present in him unless he has a perfect reason (*ratio perfecta*; Ep. 124. 11); the agent will reach the good when he or she has reached reason (Ep. 124. 8–9) and, while divine good is perfect by nature, human good can become perfect by practice or by the agent's effort, since god's good is given by nature and man's good is acquired by one's care (*unius bonum natura perficit, dei scilicet, alterius cura, hominis*; Ep. 124. 14). This last remark in Seneca's argument suggests that the human being has the possibility of doing something different from what he or she should do. Thus while irrational animals must just follow the 'conduct' of the species, the human being, because of being rational and having the same nature as god (even though human nature differs from god's nature on account of being mortal), can 'build up' his own nature by permanently adjusting his own behaviour to what is most appropriate to his nature.

The universal homology is tackled by the Stoics from the following three approaches: physics, ethics, and logic. In fact, *λόγος* manifests itself in the following three domains (which coincide with the three parts of philosophy): in nature (understood in terms of the rational order of the world), in language (as the privileged place of its manifestation insofar as the core function of language seems to be both to articulate and to give meaning to the reality through the

⁴¹ Plut. *De Stoic. Rep.* 1050c, quoting Chrysippus (= SVF 2. 937). See also Plutarch 1050a: 'For no particular thing, not even the slightest, can have come about otherwise than in conformity with the universal nature and its reason' (tr. Cherniss). I find this sort of passage not without insight, as it provides support for Long's reading. For the emphasis upon the unified view (or 'sympathy') the Stoics are interested in displaying of the cosmos as a real living being see Ch. 3 above by Meyer (esp. pp. 80–5 and the passages quoted and discussed there).

⁴² Annas 2007: 85–6. ⁴³ Of course, she doesn't make this connection.

⁴⁴ Cicero, *De Finibus* 3. 72–3; DL 7. 92; Ps.-Plutarch, *Placita* 1. 2.

⁴⁵ As underlined by Menn 1995: 1.

⁴⁶ *Hymn to Zeus*, v. 4, reading *θεοῦ μίμημα* with LS 54I. For the textual difficulties this well-known crux presents see Thom 2001: 487 n. 42.

⁴⁷ Cleanthes, *Hymn to Zeus*, vv. 21–25 (tr. Inwood-Gerson). It is noteworthy that human beings, the privileged parts of cosmic nature, are the only ones able to act contrary to the law of nature. However, the disagreement produced by this privileged part is somehow necessary to allow Zeus' ability to restore order, this order being understood as the balanced tension of opposites (see *Hymn to Zeus* vv. 18–21). In the interpretation of these lines, I side with the scholars who claim that the background for these verses should be Heraclitus' notion of the *coiunctio oppositorum* (Long 1996d: 35–57). In addition to the fact that Cleanthes seems to be quoting verbatim some Heraclitus' fragments in his *Hymn* (cf. vv. 17–25 and Heraclitus B 1, 10, and 50, DK), I fail to see why if the *λόγος* (understood in an Heraclitean manner) encompasses good and evil, it would not be possible for the *κακοί* to act 'without' it (Thom 2001: 490). Cleanthes can be incorporating Heraclitus' *logos* into his own Stoic view, according to which *logos* in humans involves the capacity of acting against what universal *logos* prescribes, i.e. by acting against their own nature. On the other hand, Thom's remark fails to explain how Cleanthes argues that no deed is performed independently of the rational order of god (see *Hymn to Zeus*, v. 15: *Οὐδέ τι γίνεται ἔργον ἐπὶ χθονὶ σοῦ δίχα*), implying that the fact that the *κακοί* act ignoring what universal law prescribes is contemplated in the providential plan of Zeus. In other words, what the wicked do is part of universal order. It is true that no deed takes place without god, *except what the wicked do in their folly* (*Hymn to Zeus*, vv. 15–17); but at the same time god is described as being able to put in order what is in disorder. In my view, this is stated as if the possibility human beings have to act against the rational order and the ability god has to put in order what is in disorder were recurrent processes that constitute such an order. Besides, one should take into account the fact that it is god himself who produces a creature (human being) able to be in conflict both with the rational order of universe and with him. Thus a much more natural way of approaching the issue would be by considering that, to some extent, it is necessary that some parts of the whole are at odds with the rational order. What Cleanthes probably has in mind is Plato's idea that evil cannot be eradicated, for there must always be something opposed to the good (*Theaetetus* 176a5–6); this is, again, a Heraclitean view (both in Plato and in the Stoics).

discourses in which existent things are expressed and accounted for), and in action (when λόγος embodies itself in the figure of the wise person, the entirely rational agent). The Stoics spoke of 'reason' and 'rational' in two complementary manners: on the one hand, in a cosmological sense, according to which nothing occurs independently of the rational organization of the cosmos, to the extent that everything happens in accordance with the divine λόγος ruling and pervading all the things.⁴⁸ Thus, it might be said that for the Stoics all that is natural is rational and all that is rational is natural.⁴⁹ On the other hand, there is an anthropological sense of reason and rational, according to which human beings—from a certain specific age but virtually as from birth⁵⁰—have the faculty of becoming aware of their participation in the cosmic order. For humans such taking part in cosmic order is possible by acknowledging their own condition, which, at a certain moment, can involve as a consequence a morally worthy behaviour since the agent will be able to adjust his or her actions according to what he or she recognizes as being suitable to living in agreement. There is an interesting argument attributed to Musonius Rufus that is helpful to understand this point. When an old man was asked what the best provision of old age would be, he responded: 'the same as the one of youth age as well: to live methodically and according to nature' (τὸ ζῆν ὁδῶ καὶ κατὰ φύσιν; my translation). In order to understand this, Musonius argues, what one should do is comprehend that the human being's nature is not directed at pleasure (as is not the nature of irrational animals either).⁵¹ A living being is living according to nature when it depicts its own perfection or excellence (ἀρετή) by means of which the living being acts according to its own nature. Now since each one's nature leads each one towards his or her virtue or excellence, it is reasonable to maintain that a human being is not living according to nature when she is living in pleasure, but when living in her own perfection or excellence (Frag. 17. 89. 12–90. 1, ed. Hense). The argument applies both to rational and irrational beings, and shows that each one's excellence is the criterion ruling each one's life. It also exemplifies the way in which universal nature can be a criterion for moral action in humans: given that human nature is part of universal nature and somehow *is* universal nature, and since both universal and human nature display what is perfect or excellent,

⁴⁸ Cleanthes, *Hymn to Zeus*, vv. 7–8: 'All this cosmos . . . obeys you'; 'With it you direct the universal reason which runs to all through all things' v. 12; 'No deed is done on earth . . . god, without your offices', v. 15 (tr. Long and Sedley).

⁴⁹ This assertion, as indicated above (n. 21), is potentially misleading insofar as a plant e.g. is something natural but one would fail to see in what sense it is rational. However, a plant or an animal is 'rational' not in the sense of having a rational faculty, but due to the fact that they depict part of the rational order of the cosmos.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Scholium to Plato's Alcibiades* 1. 121e; Iamblichus, *De Anima*, in Stob. *Ecl.* 1. 48. 8, p. 317. 21 ed. Wachsmuth (= *SVF* 1. 149); *DL* 7. 55–6.

⁵¹ Not even a horse, Musonius contends, would consider that it attains its own end simply because of the fact that it can eat, drink, or copulate, but when performing what is proper to a horse (Frag. 17. 5–8, ed. Hense). This appears to be an argument addressed against the Epicurean tenet that pleasure is the end (see also *DL* 7. 85–6).

it follows that to live according to virtue (i.e. the perfection or excellence proper of the rational living being) is the same as living according to nature. Therefore, in order to conduct a rational life a human must live according to virtue, insofar as the exercise of virtue shows what is best in her. And what is best in a human being is the exercise of her rationality.

The Stoics maintain that we do physics 'whenever we investigate the cosmos and what is in the cosmos'.⁵² Chrysippus seems to have been even more emphatic with regard to the relevance of physics for ethics when asserting that physical speculation (φυσικὴ θεωρία) is to be undertaken for the sake of nothing else than the distinction concerning the good and the evil (as passage C stresses). If this is so, physics turns out to be a very important field of knowledge for ethics and, more specifically, for the person who is interested in developing a rational life. Certainly, Annas would object that, even though one starts by considering Stoic ethics as depending on Stoic physics and by giving a significant role to a providential view of cosmic nature, such a view ends by discussing the specific topics of ethics, i.e. virtue, vice, emotion, and so on, without appealing to *pneuma* or the cosmos. However, in the holistic perspective of all the parts of philosophy I am interested in emphasizing here, a Stoic might argue that there are some topics belonging to physics that might be relevant to our understanding of ethics. For instance, virtues are states of the soul (a body, according to the Stoics); but as bodies, they are causes of incorporeal effects: it is because of prudence that being prudent occurs (γίνεται; Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 1. 138. 23–5, LS 55A). Moreover, Cleanthes seems to have maintained that tension (of πνεῦμα) is the impact of fire, and that if it becomes convenient in the soul to achieve what is fitting it is called 'power' (δύναμις). Such a power, Cleanthes goes on to argue, when it arises in situations that manifestly require persistence, is continence; when it arises in situations requiring endurance, it is courage (Plut. *De Stoic. Repug.* 1034D–E; LS 61C). In other words, the virtuous dispositions of a rational agent are understood in terms of *pneuma's* good tension (εὐτονία).⁵³ Indeed, these textual examples do not endorse the thesis that ethics is *grounded* in physics, but they are useful to note the relevance that the theory of causality and of *pneuma* had within the practical domain. Both causality and pneumatic theory are properly discussed within Stoic physics; nevertheless, they were not limited to the purely physical account and they did extend to the ethical sphere as well. These passages also make it clear why the Stoics did not feel uncomfortable when introducing some physical issues within their ethics.

This however does not shed light on how physics is a virtue, although it implicitly suggests that, in order to investigate the cosmos and what is in it,

⁵² Ps.-Plutarch, *Placita* 1. 2; *SVF* 2. 35; LS 26A.

⁵³ See also Galen, *PHP* 270. 10–24; 272. 9–274. 26, ed. De Lacy. The same thing can be seen in the standard definition of two basic emotional states, such as pain ('a contraction of the soul') and pleasure ('an expansion of the soul'). Both contraction and expansion are *pneuma's* movements.

i.e. in order to do physics, we should have a cognitive disposition as well as the knowledge of the principles governing the cosmos as an ordered totality. A passage in Cicero's *De Finibus* can be helpful in clarifying this point. Cicero explains, through his Stoic spokesman Cato, that the Stoics reasonably (*non sine causa*) have called physics 'virtue', and this is so because the one who is about to live according to nature (*convenienter naturae*) must start from the whole world and from its management (*procuratio*). Cato underlines that no one can judge truly (*vere iudicare*) on good and evil unless he has known the whole plan or purpose (*ratio*)⁵⁴ of nature, and also the life of the gods, as well as whether human nature is or is not in agreement with that of the universe (*De Finibus* 3. 73). This important passage from Cicero shows at least three points: first, it makes it clear that physics is a virtue because it is a form of knowledge centred on the *κόσμος*, a knowledge which in turn is the starting point for those whose concern is to live virtuously. Second, this knowledge that physics consists in is relevant for the practical life of the agent, since it is at least a necessary condition for the understanding of good and evil. So, although physics is not knowledge of the good, it is anyway a knowledge that contributes to the knowledge of the good; besides, it doesn't matter that physics is not defined as 'knowledge of the good'. The Stoics were also willing to assert that dialectic is a virtue (DL 7. 46) and, of course, 'virtue' applied to dialectic does not mean 'knowledge of the good', either. Third, while this passage confirms, once more, the importance of cosmic nature for ethics (this time in Cicero's *De Finibus*) it does not imply, *pace* the heterodox view, that physics only concerns the understanding we can have of ethics. Annas argues that 'if cosmic nature were a first principle for ethics', we should find 'direct derivations of particular ethical theses purely from cosmic nature', but this is exactly what we do not find.⁵⁵ But to my judgement, this passage from Cicero shows that physics for the Stoics is concerned with more than the understanding we can have of ethics; it rather presents physics as a necessary field of knowledge to deal with ethics and, as I hope to show below, it gives some basic patterns for practical ethics. Thus, even though we cannot find some particular tenets directly derived from cosmic nature, cosmic nature plays an important role in setting criteria for decision-making on concrete situations of action (see below, section 4).

It is likely that a promising starting point for clarifying the role of cosmic nature for ethics is to examine the Stoic sage's life, and this is so because the

Stoic sage can be taken to be a standard of a perfect rational life or, in other words, as perfectly mirroring universal reason. To be sure, the many astonishing characteristics of the sage depict him as a perfectly rational being and as a good exemplar of the universal reason he exemplifies.⁵⁶ The amazing qualities of the sage show that, at least in theory, he is the only one who truly lives in accordance with nature. Of course, the universal nature does not perform any of these activities, but the idea is that all that happens in nature as a whole is balanced and perfectly done, and this is 'rationality' or rather a macrocosmic version of what rationality is. The Stoic goal of living according to nature should presuppose 'the ability to make correct judgments about facts and values',⁵⁷ and this is something that only the sage can perform, because he is the only one whose judgement is always correct rather than just sometimes, or even at random.

But one might wonder what this has to do with physics. The Stoic sage, whose psychological disposition is 'right reason', understands the causal nexus of fate, since he understands the principle of universal causality, according to which all the phenomena are accounted for and all the events and particular facts of the world can be predicted as well.⁵⁸ Everything is determined not only physically—for it is part of a continuous causal series in a universe which is continuous—but also providentially. This is the reason why, at least theoretically, if one knew the laws of the causal interaction and the manner god acts, i.e. if one were a Stoic sage, one would be able to predict all future events. This being so, chance events are just phenomena whose causes are unknown to us.⁵⁹ Chrysippus, cited by Epictetus, argues:

so long as the consequences are unclear to me, I always hold to the things best adapted to secure what is in accordance with nature, for god himself created me with the faculty for selecting (*ἐκλεκτικόν*) such things. If I really knew that it was fated (*καθεύματα*) for

⁵⁶ All the astonishing characteristics of the Stoic sage are conveniently listed in Stob. *Ecl.* 2. 111–12.

⁵⁷ Long 1996b: 94. In addition to these extraordinary qualities we should also recall three other characteristics the wise person has: lack of precipitancy (*ἀπροπτικότητα*), unhastiness (*ἀνεκκαύτης*), and irrefutability (*ἀνελεγχία*; DL 7. 47). Irrefutability, defined as strength in argument to avoid being carried away by argument into the contradictory of one's own thesis, reminds of Plato's claim that 'the truth is never refuted' (*Gorgias* 473b10–11).

⁵⁸ This argument can be regarded as being a sort of 'phenomenal argument' in order to explain the existence of fate. Indeed, it is a fact empirically evident that the world has an organic unity (cf. Alexander of Aphrodisias, *On Fate* 192. 8–13, ed. Bruns, and Ch. 3 above). From the Stoic point of view, the success of divination also appears to be a fact empirically obvious (cf. Diogenianus, *apud Eusebium, Praep. Ev.* 4.3.1 = SVF 2. 939). As Diogenianus notes, Chrysippus' argument sounds circular, since he tries to prove the existence of fate out of divination, but his belief in divination as an effective method to predict future events presupposes the doctrine of fate. See also Cicero, *On Divination* 1. 34.

⁵⁹ Cf. Alexander of Aphrodisias, *On Fate* 174. 1–11; ed. Bruns, and especially Cicero, *Academica* 1. 29. In other passages the theoretical possibility of predicting future events from antecedent causes is put forward (Cicero, *On Divination* 1. 127–8), something that only the wise person might perform. Divination and its species are indicated in Stobaeus as a characteristic of the Stoic sage person (see *Ecl.* 2. 67. 13–19; 114. 16–21, ed. Wachsmuth). In both passages divination is defined

⁵⁴ For this interpretation of *ratio* see Glare 1996: s.v. *ratio*, 10: 'A plan of action, purpose'.

⁵⁵ Annas 1993: 165. In her recent paper on Stoic ethics she points out that Cicero's *De Finibus* 3, unlike DL 7. 85–9, is a key text where Stoic ethics is not presented via cosmic nature (Annas 2007: 85). But, as I have already pointed out above, this remark fails to consider the relevance that cosmic nature has in *De Finibus* 3. 73. Like in the Plutarch passage commented on above, I would say that, even though one should admit her remark with regard to the order of presentation of Stoic ethics, that does not mean that cosmic nature does not have relevance for ethics. At least within the physical presentation of ethics considerations related to cosmic nature and providence are relevant.

me to be ill at this moment, I would have an impulse to be so: for the foot too, if it had mind, would have an impulse to be muddled.⁶⁰

The analogy is clearly aimed at showing that a rational being is to the cosmos, as a foot is to the man. It also underlines the relation between one's reason and cosmic reason. If one is aware of what is fated for oneself, one knows the providential plan of god, and as a consequence of an active exercise of his rational capacity one can understand his painful situation *sub specie rationis dei*. And this knowledge is knowledge of the cosmos, i.e. it is 'physics'. So this passage again shows (against the heterodox view) that cosmic nature plays a relevant role for ethics in Chrysippus' Stoicism.

One of the problems one has to face at this point is that being a Stoic sage is something extremely hard, as recognized by the Stoics themselves. As a matter of fact, Zeno, Cleanthes, and Chrysippus explicitly acknowledged this. In the same line of thought, the innovative Panaetius recognized this difficulty at the same time that he attempted to humanize the picture of the Stoic sage.⁶¹ The description of the Stoic sage as the one who makes use of virtues during *all his life* gave the early Stoics the bad press of presenting their ethics (and politics) as an absolutely impracticable theory: in fact, the Stoic sage—with his characteristics of infallibility, rational perfection, absolute coherence (insofar as in him the perfect *ὁμολογία* with nature is embodied)—is someone extremely rare.⁶² If Chrysippus, Plutarch mocks, does not show as a virtuous person either himself or any of his own acquaintances or teachers,⁶³ what about the rest of human beings? I think that the Stoics were willing to suggest that even ordinary people might attain this ideal, as long as they also are rational beings and thereby particular instances of universal nature. This is what at least the Stoic Epictetus suggests when arguing that engaging in argument is relevant insofar as it has a connection with how we should behave in our lives (*Diss.* 1. 7. 1),

as 'knowledge considering the signs coming from the gods'. The Stoic thesis of universal causality is well attested in several sources; cf. Diogenianus, *apud Eusebium, Praep. Ev.* 6. 7. 8. 1–39 (SVF 2. 925 and 998); Plut. *De Stoic. Repug.* 1049f–1050d (cf. SVF 2. 937), 1056c. The detailed discussion of this and other aspects presupposes important issues concerning the connection among ethics, logic, and physics that cannot be developed here. For a more detailed treatment of these topics, allow me to refer to my 2001: 728–50 and to Boeri and Vigo 2002: 32–51.

⁶⁰ *Diss.* 2. 6. 9–10, tr. R. Hard slightly modified. For a useful discussion of this text I refer to Menn 1995: 23–4.

⁶¹ 'Since we do not live with men who are perfect and clearly wise, but with those who are doing splendidly if they have in them mere imagines of virtue, I think that we must understand this too: no one should be wholly neglected if any indication of virtue appears in him,' Panaetius, cited by Cicero, *On Duties* 1. 46 (tr. E. M. Atkins).

⁶² See Stob. *Ecl.* 2. 100. 2, 112. 1–5 (ed. Wachsmuth).

⁶³ *De Stoic. Rep.* 1048e (SVF 3. 662 and 668); Seneca, *Ep.* 42. 1; Alexander, *On Fate* 199. 16–22, ed. Bruns; Sextus Empiricus, *M.* 9. 133 and esp. 7. 433, where he ironically says that the Stoics Zeno, Cleanthes, and Chrysippus counted themselves among the base people, not among the wise (see also Sextus, *PH* 3. 250, *DL* 3. 32, and Cic. *Acad.* 2. 145).

and this engagement does not seem to be reserved to a certain kind of people, but it is arguably applicable to all human beings. To the question 'is it possible to be a perfectly rational person?' we should give at least two responses. On the one hand, an affirmative one: if every human shares the same rational nature, then all of us, due to the mere fact that we are humans, are able to develop our rationality towards the correct direction and therefore everyone is capable of becoming a sage. On the other hand, the response should be negative, since although people usually develop their rationality, not everyone develops it in the Stoic sense of 'right reason'. Hence not everyone becomes a Stoic sage.

My remarks on the connection between ethics and physics can be objected to in several ways. For example, one might object that it is not a good argument to say that, given that for the Stoics all parts of philosophy are not separate from one another (*DL* 7. 40), then, there must be a close connection between ethics and physics. For the same close connection could be emphasized with regard to ethics and logic. And I would admit that point, which, however, does not constitute a serious objection to what I am suggesting. First of all, because Stoic ethics or, more precisely, Stoic psychology of action (which rarely can be separated from ethics in Stoicism) in some important details presupposes some notions originally belonging to logic (like the theory of *λεκτά*). Second, as indicated above, dialectic (or logic), like physics, is said to be a virtue,⁶⁴ and a virtue 'which contains other virtues as species'.⁶⁵ These virtues are *ἀπροπτωσία* ('non-precipitancy'), *ἀνεκκαίωτης* ('unhastiness'), *ἀνελεγχία* ('irrefutability'). I want to focus briefly on the first two specific virtues just listed: 'non-precipitancy' and 'unhastiness'. The virtue of 'non-precipitancy' is defined as 'knowledge of when one ought to assent and when not';⁶⁶ 'unhastiness' is defined as 'a strong minded rationality (*ἰσχυρὸς λόγος*) with respect to what is likely (*εἰκός*), so that one does not give in to it'.⁶⁷ Non-precipitancy and unhastiness describe excellences proper to the sage, and they underlie the Stoic claim that the sage never errs. On the contrary, those who are not well trained in handling their impressions have precipitancy (*προπέτεια*) and veer into disorder (*ἀκοσμία*) and hastiness (*εἰκαυότης*). Now, although these two virtues are 'dialectical virtues', they play a significant role for the Stoic psychology of action (and thus for Stoic ethics) in examining the psychological state the virtuous person should have. Given the Stoic insistence on the rationality of nature, with the divine *logos* immanent everywhere, the possession of these particular dialectical virtues on behalf of the sage is another example of the presence of the universal reason in the agent who has understood the structure of the cosmos and, accordingly, has translated such a structure into his cognitive dispositions.

⁶⁴ Cic. *De Finibus* 3.72; *DL* 7. 46.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *DL* 7. 46 (tr. Inwood-Gerson).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

4. COSMIC NATURE AND THE PROPER OBJECT OF ETHICS

The other complicated issue when trying to show the role that cosmic nature plays for ethics in Stoicism is focused on how the particular tenets of Stoic ethics are related to cosmic nature. For example, how cosmic nature is connected with the thesis that virtue alone is good, vice alone bad, and that all else is indifferent; or that while virtue is chosen, the indifferents are just selected; or that while some indifferents contain a selective value (*ἄξια ἐκλεκτικῇ*), other indifferents contain a disvalue which is non-selective (*ἀπαξία ἀπεκλεκτικῇ*). We usually pursue things like life, health, pleasure, wealth, reputation (the so-called 'preferred indifferents'; *προηγμένα*), and avoid things like death, illness, pain, poverty (the 'dispreferred indifferents'; *ἀποπροηγμένα*). And we do so because, although life, health, pleasure, and wealth are not goods by themselves, it is 'natural' that we pursue them, insofar as the preferred indifferents (or rather 'the preferred indifferents for themselves'; *δι' αὐτά*) are 'according to nature' (DL 7. 107). Moreover, the preferred indifferents are those containing a value, this value being a 'contribution to the life in agreement' (*σύμβλησιν πρὸς τὸν ὁμολογούμενον βίον*; DL 7. 105). This important detail shows that preferred indifferents were relevant for the happy life understood as a life in agreement for they contribute to attaining such an agreement.⁶⁸ One might suspect that in the theory of indifferents there is a trace of the rationality that nature confers upon the agent. In fact, it is natural, and hence rational, to choose to have a natural ability (*εὐφυνία*) rather than not to have such a natural ability, wealth rather than poverty, soundness rather than lack of soundness. The natural disposition of human beings to select the preferred indifferents also points out that, even though the only real good is virtue, virtuous life depends, to some extent, upon the assumption of things that are neither good nor bad, and of things that contain an intrinsic value or disvalue as well as a value and disvalue added by the agent. In fact, as observed by the heretic Aristo, depending on certain circumstances, the agent can choose a dispreferred indifferent rather than a preferred indifferent. Aristo, as reported by Sextus, would have argued against the Zenonian and Chrysippean theory of indifferents by focusing on two related points. (i) To call some items—such as health—'preferred' is equivalent to calling it 'good'; hence the difference between good and preferred indifferents is solely in name. (ii) The indifferents between virtue and vice are not some of them preferred *by nature* (*φύσει*) and some dispreferred; rather, they depend on the circumstances (*παρὰ τὰς περιστάσεις*)—which vary with the times—such that the things which are

⁶⁸ This raises the problem of how something which is not truly good can contribute to attaining the agreement with nature. I shall not develop this issue here.

said to be preferred are not *absolutely* (*πάντως*) preferred, and the items which are said to be dispreferred are not necessarily (*κατ' ἀνάγκην*) dispreferred.⁶⁹ The purpose of Aristo clearly was to deny that the value of intermediate items between virtue and vice could be determined on account of their conformity to nature. If the sage's judgement can attribute value to what is dispreferred (e.g. sickness), it follows, in Aristo's view, that the preferred indifferents are not according to nature. Aristo's criticism does not affect the bulk of the theory, as long as it maintains that indifferents neither benefit nor harm, which is the same as arguing that no indifferent is absolutely beneficial (cf. DL 7. 102). Aristo's criticism, centred on the thesis that there is no indifferent that is preferred by nature, due to the fact that depending on the circumstances the sage will choose sickness (a dispreferred indifferent) rather than health (a preferred indifferent), also does not affect the orthodox view. In fact, the orthodox view does not say that preferred indifferents are preferred *by nature*, in the sense that they come to be *absolutely* (*πάντως*) preferred in any circumstance.⁷⁰ For instance, the Stoic Musonius is willing to argue that if one in old age were able to admit death without fear and with confidence (*τὸ προσδέχεσθαι τὸν θάνατον ἀφόβως καὶ θαρραλέως*), one would provide something significant for living without pain and according to nature.⁷¹ In other words, even though one is naturally inclined to prefer life instead of death, in old age, when death is approaching, one should accept death as a natural stage in life.⁷² In addition to this, the sage evaluates the variability indicated by Aristo with regard to the fact that, depending on the circumstance, the person will choose, for instance, being sick instead of being healthy.⁷³ And the sage is the one who is aware of the rational order, which he has incorporated into his own character and, accordingly, he is the only one well qualified to determine what is good or beneficial at a given circumstance.

It does seem to me that we have good reasons for contending that the issue of indifferents was particularly important both in Stoic ethics in general and in practical ethics in particular. If Aristo's remark is correct and the sage will choose a dispreferred indifferent rather than a preferred one in a concrete situation, then, Stoic ethics appears to be more practicable than was thought by critics of Stoicism in antiquity. The consideration of the indifferents became so significant for the Stoics that it was incorporated into two reformulations of the end. In

⁶⁹ Sextus Empiricus, *M.* 11.64–7.

⁷⁰ In the sense that they are absolutely and, thereby, invariably preferred, but in the sense that we are naturally inclined to choose preferred indifferents instead of dispreferred indifferents.

⁷¹ Musonius Rufus, *Frag.* 17 (p. 92, 14–17, ed. Hense).

⁷² This is reminiscent of Socrates' claim at the beginning of Plato's *Crito* 43b10–11: 'It would not be fitting at my age to resent the fact that I must die now' (tr. Grube).

⁷³ Sextus, *M.* 11.66: *ἔλοιτ' ἂν μᾶλλον ὁ σοφὸς τὸ νοσεῖν κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν καιρὸν ἢ τὸ ὑγιαίνειν*. The example is that of those who, even being in sound health, serve under a tyrant and, because of this, are destroyed in their rationality. In this case health is neither absolutely preferred nor is sickness something absolutely rejected.

fact, Diogenes Laertius reports that Diogenes of Babylon maintained that 'the end consists in reasoning well (εὐλογιστεῖν) in the selection of things according to nature' (DL 7. 88). Panaetius, for his part, stated that 'the end is to live according to the inclinations (ἀφορμαί) given to us by nature'.⁷⁴ In both cases, I submit, things according to nature and the inclinations given to us by nature must be the preferred indifferent, of which we are aware once we have developed our reason, since our reason somehow *is* our nature. And this is so because, as Antipater says, we select the preferred indifferents 'according to a preferential reason' (κατὰ προηγούμενον λόγον),⁷⁵ this 'preferential' or principal reason being our developed reason indicating what is convenient in a real rational life. What guides this process in a mature human being, who has changed his initial instinctive impulses of self-preservation for rationalized impulses coinciding with the preferred indifferents, is reason and its preference for the selective value, 'according to which, when the given circumstances allow it (διδόντων τῶν πραγμάτων), he selects these things rather than those; such as health instead of sickness, life instead of death, and wealth instead of poverty'.⁷⁶ I regard this reference to 'circumstances' as being important because it compels us to take into account that the preferred indifferents are not always and in every case preferable. It will be the task of the prudential reason of the wise person to decide when such preferred indifferents are effectively preferable.

Now, I think, we are in a better position to start understanding how cosmic nature is related to some of the basic tenets of Stoic ethics. First, if we concentrate again on the distinction between what is really good (virtue) and what is good in the derivative sense of being preferred 'according to a preferential reason', we can notice that virtue alone is really good because (i) virtue is the sage's state of the soul (i.e. the soul of the agent who has been able to unify her nature with the nature of the whole),⁷⁷ and (ii) because good is benefit and virtue as well as virtuous action are benefits (cf. Sextus, *M.* 11. 22–3; LS 60G). Second, if the person actually has unified her nature with that of the whole, she will be

⁷⁴ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 2. 21, p. 183 (Stählin) (Testimony 53, ed. Alesse = Frag. 96 ed. Van Straaten). Alesse argues in favour of rendering ἀφορμαί by 'attitudini', and refers to Liddel *et al.* 1949: s.v. ἀφορμή (see Alesse 1997: 183). She explains her choice by arguing that such ἀφορμαί 'are present just in man, since they are proper of rational nature', 'it is not completely correct to interpret them (i.e. the ἀφορμαί) as instinctive inclinations, natural and spontaneous impulses'. Of course, I'm not understanding ἀφορμαί as instinctive items: if one takes them to be the natural inclinations of a rational being, one has no need to interpret them as 'instinctive inclinations'. They simply are the inclinations belonging to a rational being.

⁷⁵ Or 'on the basis of a predominating reason' or 'in accordance with the principal reason' as Inwood translates (1985: 202, and Inwood's tr. of Stobaeus' extract of Stoic ethics, in Inwood and Gerson 1997: *ad loc.*, respectively).

⁷⁶ Antipater, quoted by Stob. *Ecl.* 2. 83. 13 ss, ed. Wachsmuth.

⁷⁷ If my account regarding how 'nature' should be understood in those passages where nature and reason are closely related (and also the fact that our natures are parts of the universal nature, and that this universal nature is not something alien or external to us) is sound (see the end of sect. 3 above), it appears to me that the concordance or coherence demanded in DL 7. 89 might be interpreted both in terms of a self-concordance and concordance with the whole.

able to accept that, under certain circumstances, she should choose 'to come out from life' or, as Musonius reminds us, she should accept death without fear and with confidence. Both to come out from life and to accept death are reasonable actions insofar as they contribute to the administration of the whole and, at the same time, to keep rationality in universe (recall once more the example of a person who serves under a tyrant, and to avoid being destroyed in his rationality by the tyrant, he can reasonably choose to commit suicide). This is the same as arguing that the agent is now capable of considering events from a universal reason viewpoint, because the agent somehow *is* universal reason. But, of course, the person does not need to commit suicide in order to start regarding events from a universal reason standpoint. In a more trivial sense—but not less important—one can do that when one understands that the right thing to do is to act with moderation or with justice; this understanding—which is both intellectual and practical⁷⁸—guarantees the agent will live a real rational life and display in his behaviour the rational order of the whole.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The theory underlying the idea of rational unity—a tenet that in the domain of political theory gives place to the Stoic cosmopolitanism—is explained out of certain systematic assumptions related to a philosophical approach based on a new conception of rationality: the thesis, alien to the thinkers of the classic period, that all the universe is pervaded by reason to such extent that there is nothing that is not an instance of universal reason. Within this rationality inherent to the cosmic system, humans are parts especially privileged, insofar as they may generate reflective processes and, in this way, they are able to understand the structure of the world. The common principle that all humans take part in teaches us, according to the Stoics, that the only thing that places us at a superior level with regard to our fellow human beings is having a better disposition of character, that is to say, a virtuous character. Both our common origin and rational structure also prove that nobody is nobler than anyone else, except with regard to a more correct and more suitable disposition for good arts (*rectius ingenium et artibus bonis aptius*). This is so, argues Seneca, because the world (*mundus*) is 'the unique father for everyone, and the primary origin (*prima origo*) of each one is reduced to it, whether it is a distinguished or an obscure position'.⁷⁹ In its context this passage accounts for and develops the Stoic thesis that distinctions—based on nobility titles or cradle privileges—among

⁷⁸ For this approach in early Stoicism see Stob. *Ecl.* 2. 63. 11–12, ed. Wachsmuth, and DL 7. 126, 130. For the same view in late Stoicism cf. Musonius Rufus, Frag. 6 (p. 22. 7–9, ed. Hense). A brief discussion of this topic can be found in Boeri 2005: 402–5.

⁷⁹ Seneca, *On Benefices* 3. 28. 1.

human beings are totally arbitrary and conventional. For the Stoics the just is by nature (DL 7. 128), and given that all human beings were born endowed with rationality, all of them are equally capable of exercising their rationality in the right way. As Seneca puts it, emphasizing once more our condition of 'parts of the whole', our shared rationality is something divine in us, who are parts of god (*Ep.* 92. 30; *SVF* 2. 637). Appropriation or familiarization (*οἰκείωσις*), understood in its 'social' dimension—i.e. the appropriation or familiarization which in the first stage of life is concerned with the 'egoist' interests of the living being with himself, but later can be developed towards the familiarization with the other members of the species in a sort of 'altruistic move'—is a proper picture of how god or the universal reason expects us to love our fellow human beings.

The Stoic theses, no matter how counterintuitive they look, can be the result of a legitimate confidence in 'right reason', a reason that, as other philosophers thought in the history of philosophy, would be able to guarantee an increasing and permanent moral progress which, ultimately, would end by abolishing the permanent armies and war, as well as secure the possibility of a 'world citizenship', where there would not be National States, but a World State. This is the translation that the Enlightenment made of the cosmopolitanism and rational naturalism of the Stoics.⁸⁰ Nothing of what in fact happened in the last century or of what is happening in the present one probably would make us think that the Stoic ideal of cosmopolitanism and government by reason is possible. This state of affairs, however, not only does not deactivate the Stoic ideal of a world community of rational beings who are not willing to inflict pain or harm on the other members of their species; maybe it even strengthens that ideal. A Stoic philosopher would be willing to argue that what in fact is going on does not prevent him from thinking of what *should* happen. A Stoic would also argue that human beings continue to behave like irrationals with respect of their other fellow men precisely because they refuse to accept that, because of our being members of the same community of rational beings, we are able to train our characters properly and that, once our characters have been trained, we are also able to recognize in each of ourselves the features that characteristically describe our humanity and that of others. From a less optimistic point of view one

⁸⁰ I am thinking above all of Kant. In *Toward Perpetual Peace* he quotes the example of the dog tied to a cart (in Seneca's version, *Ep.* 107. 11) within a context of political discussion: *fata volentem ducunt, nolentem trahunt*: 'Fates lead the willing, drive the unwilling' (8. 365, ed. Kant's *Gesammelte Schriften*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co. 1900). In Kant's view, nature is the guarantee of perpetual peace since in its mechanistic course it displays a *finality* (*Zweckmäßigkeit*) that introduces concord (*Eintracht*) in discord (*Zwietracht*), no matter what man wishes. When Kant asserts that nature wills that this or that happen, he suggests very stoically, that he does not mean that nature can impose a *duty* to do something—since practical reason *without coercion* can do that—but that nature does what it does, no matter what we want. The thesis that nature follows a mechanistic course, but within a teleological order, sounds very Stoic, too. Even though the Stoics argue for a rigid causal order, they do not describe such an order as a purely mechanistic system. The teleological factor appears clearly outlined in the notion of providence, which can be identified with fate.

might reply that the desire to destroy our fellow human beings and, eventually, the world is actually part of our nature. If this is the case, the view that some acts of aggression or certain terrible physical or psychological pains (like torture) inflicted on other human beings are 'inhuman' is self-refutable, since only human beings perform this kind of acts. However, a Stoic can always respond that to maintain that aggression is what characteristically describes human nature is a false belief, and that this belief is false can be proved from the fact that if everybody thought and acted in that way, we would destroy the cosmos, i.e. the 'order', which means that we would end up by destroying ourselves since each of us is a microcosmic instance of the whole world. This is the ideal that, in Marcus Aurelius' words, says:

All things are reciprocally interwoven . . . , everything is coordinated and confers order to the same cosmos (*συγκοσμεῖ τὸν αὐτὸν κόσμον*). For cosmos is a unity made up of all things, and god is one, pervading all things. And there is only one reality (*οὐσία*) and only one law, i.e. universal reason (*λόγος κοινός*) of all the living beings that are intelligent, and there is only one truth, since perfection (*τελειότης*) of the living beings that are alike in kind and that participate in the same reason is one, too. (7. 9; my tr.)

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8

Why Physics?

Brad Inwood

My problem begins with Socrates, and a widespread view about his philosophical activity. Aristotle makes the point twice in famous texts (revised Oxford translation, slight changes). 'Socrates, however, was busying himself about ethical matters and neglecting the world of nature as a whole . . .' (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* A 987b1–2). 'In the time of Socrates . . . people gave up inquiring into nature and philosophers diverted their attention to politics and to the virtues which benefit mankind' (*Parts of Animals* 642a28–31). Cicero shared this view of Socrates. Three famous texts stand witness. *Tusculan Disputations* 5. 10 gives us the catchphrase: 'But Socrates was the first to call philosophy down from the heavens, to locate it in cities, even to bring it into homes, and to compel philosophy to enquire about life and ethics, good and bad things.' In *Academica* 1. 15 Varro says:

I believe (and everyone agrees on this) that Socrates was the first to call philosophy away from hidden matters which nature herself had concealed—the preoccupation of all philosophers before him—and to introduce it to ordinary life so that it could enquire about virtues and vices and generally about good and bad things. He held [and this is the important part] that the heavens are far beyond our knowledge or (if they can indeed be known) that they have no bearing on living well.

Readers of the *Apology* and the *Phaedo* know how hard it is to come to a firm view on the real historical situation, but the dominant ancient view of Socrates is clear enough.¹ When we think of the Stoics as Socratic philosophers, then, one

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¹ Even allowing for the 'Socratic' providential teleology in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* 1. 4 and 4. 3.