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# MAKING SENSE OF STOIC INDIFFERENTS

JACOB KLEIN

## 1. Introduction

ACCORDING to the older Stoics, virtue is the only good and the sole constituent of happiness, but certain ordinary objects of desire, such as health and wealth, possess a kind of value that makes them fitting objects of pursuit. These items are *indifferent*, the Stoics say, but nonetheless *promoted*. Though health and wealth make no contribution to the human good, the Stoics argue that we are to pursue them whenever circumstances allow. Indeed, a failure to maintain one's health and wealth in ordinary circumstances is a failure of rationality and an impediment to virtue, in their view.<sup>1</sup>

This doctrine has provoked criticism in ancient commentators and puzzlement in modern ones.<sup>2</sup> An ancient line of criticism—prominent in Plutarch and Alexander of Aphrodisias—can be

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<sup>1</sup> 'Indifferents' translates the Greek *ἀδιάφορα*. Commentators have offered various translations of *προηγμένα* and *ἀποπροηγμένα*, which Cicero usually (though not always) renders as *praeposita* and *reiecta* (e.g. *Fin.* 3. 15). Some commentators favour 'preferred' and 'dispreferred', but the Greek terms do not suggest any intrinsic connection to an agent's preferences or motivating states.

<sup>2</sup> A. A. Long, for instance, speaks of the 'obscure and paradoxical relation between happiness and *τὰ κατὰ φύσιν* which resulted from the indifferent status of the latter' ('Carneades and the Stoic Telos' ['Carneades'], *Phronesis*, 12 (1967), 59–90 at 89). Cf. M. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* [*Therapy*] (Princeton, 1994): 'It is extremely difficult to tell exactly what worth

framed as a dilemma: why should we care about what is indifferent? If the Stoics believe that indifferents are somehow required for virtue, they should agree that they are goods and that they contribute either constitutively or instrumentally to the *telos* of happiness. On the other hand, if they suppose that health and wealth are worth pursuing independently of happiness, they should concede that happiness is not the only goal of action and that indifferents themselves constitute a second practical end. In either case, it appears, promoted indifferents are not properly indifferent. *Tertium non datur*.<sup>3</sup>

Neither horn of this dilemma is compatible with the Stoics' commitment to rational eudaimonism.<sup>4</sup> Since they maintain that happiness consists in virtue, and since they deny that virtue depends in

(*axia*) is, and how it is related to goodness (*to agathon*), which is consistently denied to all indifferents' (360).

<sup>3</sup> I have framed this in a way that captures the central thrust of the criticisms preserved by Plutarch, Alexander, and Cicero. Cicero and Plutarch in particular present a more pointed version of the dilemma: The Stoics must concede either (a) that the *telos* is not the goal to which every rational action is referred, or (b) that there are in fact two ends: virtue and indifferents. See Plut. *Comm. not.* 1070 F–1072 F; Cic. *Fin.* 3. 22; 4. 46–8. Cf. Alex. *Aphr. Mant.* 159. 15–168. 21 Bruns. Carneades is almost certainly responsible for the dilemma itself. It is implicit in his polemical characterizations of the Stoic end and in the structure of the *Carneadea divisio* as Cicero presents it at *Fin.* 5. 15–22 and *Tusc.* 5. 84–5. On Cicero's appropriation of Carneadean arguments see M. Schofield, 'Writing Philosophy' ['Writing'], in C. Steel (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Cicero* (Cambridge, 2013), 73–87; J. Allen, 'Carneadean Argument in Cicero's Academic Books' ['Argument'], in B. Inwood and J. Mansfeld (eds.), *Assent and Argument: Studies in Cicero's Academic Books [Assent]* (Leiden, 1997), 217–56. On the *Carneadea divisio* see esp. K. Algra, 'Chrysippus, Carneades, Cicero: The Ethical *Divisiones* in Cicero's *Lucullus*', in Inwood and Mansfeld (eds.), *Assent and Argument*, 107–39; J. Annas, 'Carneades' Classification of Ethical Theories', in A. M. Ioppolo and D. Sedley (eds.), *Pyrrhonists, Patricians, Platonizers: Hellenistic Philosophy in the Period 155–86 BC* (Naples, 2007), 189–223.

<sup>4</sup> Roughly, the view that all reasons for action are ultimately relative to and explained by an agent's own happiness. I argue that the Stoic position may be fairly characterized in this way in J. Klein, 'Stoic Eudaimonism and the Natural Law Tradition', in J. Jacobs (ed.), *Reason, Religion, and Natural Law from Plato to Spinoza* (Oxford, 2012), 57–80. In general, I accept Glenn Lesses's reasons for supposing that 'the Stoic conception of happiness satisfies Aristotle's basic constraints on an adequate notion of *eudaimonia*' ('Virtue and the Goods of Fortune in Stoic Moral Theory' ['Virtue'], *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 7 (1989), 95–127 at 98–100). See further A. A. Long, 'Stoic Eudaimonism', *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, 4 (1989), 77–101. Cf. also Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 361. Statements of Stoic eudaimonism include Stob. *Ecl.* 2. 77 (*SVF* iii. 16); *Ecl.* 2. 100 (*SVF* iii. 589); Philo, *On Moses* 2. 151 (*SVF* iii. 10). Cf. Cic. *Fin.* 1. 11; *Off.* 1. 5–6; *Tusc.* 5. 47–8. For an apparent reference to Chrysippus' eudaimonism in particular, see Plut. *Stoic. repugn.* 1035 c.

any way on outcomes beyond an agent's control, the Stoics cannot treat promoted objects or circumstances as a necessary or contributory means to happiness. They must therefore reject the first horn, excluding indifferents from their account of the end. Yet they must reject the second horn as well, for they evidently agree with Aristotle that happiness is something self-sufficient and complete, comprising any final objectives at which an agent may rationally aim.<sup>5</sup> The Stoics therefore owe their ancient critics an explanation: they need to explain how items that contribute nothing to happiness and virtue are nonetheless worthy of pursuit.

Modern commentators have raised a related difficulty for the Stoic doctrine. Rational action, they point out, essentially serves some rational goal. If indifferents do not contribute to any practical end, how can the Stoics consistently claim that there is reason to pursue them? The Stoics' commitment to rational eudaimonism appears to threaten their identification of virtue and happiness, for in order to give content to the notion of virtue and virtuous activity, it seems that something other than virtue must be a rational objective in its own right.<sup>6</sup> Thus the Stoics seem to be caught between the mixed conceptions of happiness urged by their Academic and Peripatetic critics—conceptions that make room for objectives and resources external to virtue—and the view that a virtuous agent has no reason to act at all. Indifferents appear to be both independent of teleological success and somehow required for it.

These difficulties may appear insoluble, and commentators have ultimately settled for characterizations of Stoic theory that do not

<sup>5</sup> Alexander's criticisms of the Stoic view at *Mant.* 162. 26–163. 4 Bruns presuppose that the Stoics accept such a completeness condition, and Cicero seems to assume it in defending Stoic views at *Tusc.* 5. 23 and in criticizing them at *Fin.* 4. 46.

<sup>6</sup> See e.g. C. C. W. Taylor, 'Hellenistic Ethics', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 5 (1987), 235–45: 'Choice is not rational in virtue of its form alone, but in virtue of its content, as being the kind of choice which may be expected best to promote the agent's ends. . . . The Stoics hold that the only good is rationality, defined as rationality in the choice of natural things, but rationality thus conceived requires that the natural things chosen are independently good, and are chosen because they are good' (238–40). In a similar vein, Vlastos criticizes the Identity Thesis on the grounds that it fails to 'provide a ground for rational preference between courses of action indistinguishable in respect of virtue but differing materially in other ways' ('Happiness and Virtue in Socrates' Moral Theory' ['Happiness'], in id., *Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Ithaca, NY, 1991), 200–35 at 216). Vlastos attributes this thesis to the Stoics (208 n. 37, 217 n. 65). Cf. also Plutarch: 'For what is rational [*εὐλόγιστον*] about selecting things that are not useful or valuable or objects of choice at all?' (*Comm. not.* 1072 D, trans. Cherniss).

clearly resolve them.<sup>7</sup> Some conclude that the value of promoted indifferents must after all be explicable in terms of an instrumental contribution to virtue and (apparently) that the Stoics do not mean what they say in denying this. Others effectively embrace the second horn of the ancient dilemma, supposing that promoted indifferents are independent objects of rational concern and thus that *eudaimonia*, as the Stoics conceive it, does not include every final object at which an agent may rationally aim. Still others characterize indifferents as possessing a kind of ‘pursuit’ or ‘planning’ value but have had little to say about the way in which value of this sort is distinct from the instrumental value denied to indifferents or how it may be seen to fit with the Stoic orthodoxy that *eudaimonia* consists in virtue alone.<sup>8</sup>

I believe the Stoics have a defensible account that differs from each of these interpretations and helps to resolve the difficulties they raise. I will argue that the value of indifferents, of both the promoted and dispromoted variety, should not be understood in terms of practical reasons at all, as these are ordinarily conceived. Though it remains true that indifferents provide an agent with reasons that figure in the justification of action, this is not because achieving promoted outcomes and avoiding dispromoted ones constitutes a rational aim in its own right. Rather, promoted and dispromoted indifferents figure in the justification of hormetic assents, motivating cognitions that specify a prospective course of action as appropriate (*kathēkon*). Indifferents, according to this suggestion, should

<sup>7</sup> Appealing to doctrinal differences among the Stoics themselves does not seem to be a promising way of resolving the puzzle or answering the critics. I agree here with I. G. Kidd’s judgement, and Rachel Barney’s, that claims about indifferents are too close to the doctrinal core of Stoic ethics to admit this kind of solution. As Kidd observes, the status of indifferents is clearly the crux of the debate between the Stoics and rival ethical schools, so much so that those prepared to surrender or modify it in substantive ways would simply not count as Stoics on any reasonable view. In any case, it is unclear what form such a solution could take since the key claims that give rise to the puzzle—that indifferents make no contribution to happiness but must be selected anyway—are present in each of our main doxographical sources. See I. G. Kidd, ‘Stoic Intermediates and the End for Man’ [‘Intermediates’], in A. A. Long (ed.), *Problems in Stoicism* (London, 1971), 150–72 at 150–7; I. G. Kidd, ‘The Relation of Stoic Intermediates to the *Summum Bonum*, with Reference to Change in the Stoa’, *Classical Quarterly*, NS 5 (1955), 181–94; R. Barney, ‘A Puzzle in Stoic Ethics’ [‘Puzzle’], *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 24 (2003), 303–40 at 303–4.

<sup>8</sup> For ‘pursuit value’ see J. Cooper, ‘Eudaimonism, the Appeal to Nature, and “Moral Duty” in Stoicism’ [‘Eudaimonism’], in S. Engstrom and J. Whiting (eds.), *Aristotle, Kant, and the Stoics* (Cambridge, 1996), 261–84 at 276. For ‘planning value’ see T. Brennan, *The Stoic Life: Emotions, Duties, and Fate* (Oxford, 2005), 101–2.

be regarded as a source of epistemic reasons. Their promoted status constitutes a reason to believe that a particular course of action is *kathēkon*, the one to perform, but it does not justify the action in its own right. An indifferent will count as promoted just in case there is reason to believe that selecting or pursuing an object or circumstance of its type, whether for oneself or others, is usually required by the plan expressed in rational nature. It will count as dispromoted, on the other hand, just in case there is reason to believe that pursuing something of its type is contrary, in most cases, to nature's plan. Such reasons may be defeasible in token cases: the sage may have grounds in a particular case for regarding her own health as something she must forgo or deselect. Her health remains a token instance of a promoted type, however, since health is the kind of thing rational nature allots to animate organisms usually or on the whole.

This way of conceiving indifferents differs importantly from attempts to understand the Stoic classification of indifferents in terms of final or instrumental value. Ascriptions of value are closely associated in contemporary discussions with reasons for action: to ascribe value to an object is to say there is reason to promote or pursue it, either (in the case of instrumental value) because pursuing it serves some further valuable end or (in the case of final value) because the object is worth pursuing in its own right. But these conceptions of value fit poorly with Stoic characterizations of indifferents. On the one hand, the Stoics firmly deny that indifferents contribute instrumentally to virtue or augment happiness in any way. On the other, they firmly reject the suggestion, proffered by Carneades, that promoted indifferents constitute an independent goal of rational action. What is needed is an understanding of indifferents and of the rational imperative to pursue them that does not force one of these options on the Stoics.

An epistemic account provides such an alternative, for it shows that the Stoics can treat the promoted and dispromoted status of indifferents as significant without treating indifferents either as instruments of virtue or as independently worthwhile practical objectives. On this account, the apparently mysterious way in which indifferents function in the deliberations of the Stoic agent is due to a basic difference between practical and epistemic reasons. Practical reasons—facts or considerations that justify action—may present an agent with irresolvable conflicts whenever they derive from

rational aims that cannot be jointly realized. An agent who desires both health and a schedule free from the rigours of a fitness regimen will have to weigh rival considerations favouring mutually exclusive practical ends. By contrast, epistemic reasons—facts or considerations that justify belief—do not enter into conflict in the same way. In deciding what to believe, we may indeed be faced with conflicting signs or indications. But evidential conflicts are due to limitations in our epistemic situation rather than conflicts among the facts themselves. Because an agent's epistemic reasons are directed at the single end of true belief, any conflict among them is strictly *prima facie*, resolved when the truth comes conclusively to light.<sup>9</sup>

This point helps to explain why the Stoics do not treat concern for indifferents as something that could conflict with or undermine the rationality of virtuous action. Promoted and dispromoted indifferents, it appears, provide the Stoic agent with epistemic reasons that support her deliberations about the rational organization of nature to which she seeks to conform. Yet since they are of use only in so far as they contribute to an understanding of nature's overall purpose, they are not a source of practical reasons that could conflict, even in principle, with virtue's requirements.

This proposal may invite at least two immediate objections. In the first place, it may seem to foist an anachronistic set of terms or concepts onto the Stoic theory. The language of reasons, both practical and epistemic, is beloved of contemporary philosophers, but it does not have any obvious parallel in Greek or Latin, and ancient arguments about indifferents are not conducted in clearly equivalent terms. My aim in introducing a distinction between practical and epistemic considerations is not to attribute a fully articulate distinction of this sort to the Stoics, however, but to clarify an assumption that has already been brought to the Stoic view: that the Stoics must ascribe practical justificatory weight to what is indifferent. The majority view among recent commentators is that promoted indifferents instantiate a kind of intrinsic value, one somehow subordinate to goodness but nonetheless capable of motivating and justifying action in its own right. In distinguishing between practical and epistemic considerations, I want to show that this conception of value

<sup>9</sup> Here and throughout, I set aside complications that might seem to arise from epistemic-value pluralism, according to which (in Sosa's terms) truth is not the only fundamental epistemic value. See e.g. E. Sosa, *A Virtue Epistemology: Apt Belief and Reflective Knowledge*, vol. i (Oxford, 2007), ch. 4.

does not make for a very satisfactory rendering of Stoic theory. Indeed, it strongly resembles the caricature of Stoicism advanced by the sceptical Academy. Applied to the doctrine of indifferents, this conceptual framework simply yields the wrong results.

It is unsurprising, on the other hand, to find that Stoic claims about the selective value of indifferents can be reconstructed in epistemic terms and that such a reconstruction yields a more coherent account of older Stoic theory. It is worth remembering, in this connection, that the Stoic analysis of virtue is itself an epistemic one and that the Stoics treat actions themselves as a kind of cognitive performance. In particular, they defend a strong form of motivational cognitivism according to which cognitive (i.e. representational) states of a particular form are necessary and sufficient for motivation. No *hormē* can slip into an agent's motivational set, as it were, without beginning life as a representational mental state correlated, in the rational case, with a truth-evaluable content to which the agent has given her assent. Granted such an account, to show that an agent's motivations are rational is to show that they flow from a cognitive condition that satisfies the epistemic norms the Stoics accept. Even if they do not constitute a justificatory basis for action in their own right, therefore, indifferents may play an essential role in determining the content of the cognition that underpins and comprehensively determines appropriate action. Given these details of Stoic psychology, it is unsurprising to discover that, in the context of Stoic theory, the considerations that show action to be rational can best be understood in epistemic terms, as reasons for conceiving the world in one way rather than another.

According to a second objection, if the categories of promoted and dispromoted serve an epistemic goal, or if indifferents play a role in the justification of motivating beliefs, it seems we must concede after all that the value of indifferents depends on an instrumental contribution to virtue. For *ex hypothesi*, indifferents will be instrumental in securing the cognitive condition the Stoics regard as good. But the Stoics deny that promoted indifferents contribute in any way to the end of virtue and happiness. The suggestion that indifferents serve a crucial epistemic or heuristic purpose might therefore appear to be a non-starter since it too ascribes a form of instrumental value to what is indifferent.

The reply to this objection is that, if we are comparing one set of indifferent circumstances with another, the Stoics indeed main-

tain that each is equally serviceable as far as virtue and happiness are concerned. They clearly do not suppose that promoted objects and circumstances can be *distinguished* from dispromoted ones on the basis of an instrumental contribution made by the former class. From the Stoic point of view, promoted objects and outcomes are of no more use to a virtuous agent than dispromoted ones. On the other hand, if we ask whether indifferent objects and circumstances *in general* are a means to virtue, the Stoic reply is surely yes. The Stoics do not mean to suggest that a virtuous agent can do without indifferents considered as a class any more than an artist can do without canvas and paint. As the material (*hulē*) of virtue, indifferents are necessary conditions of cognition and action generally, analogous to the formless primary matter through which Zeus himself acts.<sup>10</sup> Although I concede, therefore, that there is a respect in which the class of indifferent things as a whole contributes to the Stoic agent's conception of the good and hence to securing her happiness, I do not propose to explain the value of *promoted* as opposed to *dispromoted* indifferents in terms of this contribution. Neither class of indifferents is more useful as a means to virtue than any other, on my account, since the promoted status of some indifferents is not based on any advantage these objects specially confer. Here my interpretation is importantly distinct from attempts to explain the value of promoted indifferents in instrumental terms.<sup>11</sup>

This account is offered, finally, as a rational reconstruction. It is not fully explicit in the evidence we have, and it is motivated in part by a sense that later sources have, under the influence of the Academy, obscured or distorted the contours of Chrysippus' theory at crucial points. On the other hand, I believe it is suggested by the texts and terminology that can plausibly be traced to Chrysippus' own writings and that, in view of further essential Stoic commitments, it represents the most plausible and consistent account

<sup>10</sup> But so too is the existence of the cosmos and of the virtuous agent herself. See Alex. Aphr. *Mant.* 160–1 Bruns; Stob. *Ecl.* 2. 7. 17. Cf. G. Striker, 'Antipater, or the Art of Living' ['Antipater'], in ead., *Essays on Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics [Essays]* (Cambridge, 1996), 298–315 at 302 n. 8: 'the Stoics, on the contrary, believed [indifferents] to have only the status of necessary conditions (*ὄν οὐκ ἄνευ*), as do heaven and earth, space and time'. For indifferents as the *ὑλὴ* of virtue see Plut. *Comm. not.* 1069 E (*SVF* iii. 491), 1071 B; Clem. Al. *Strom.* 4. 6 (*SVF* iii. 114). Cf. n. 17 below.

<sup>11</sup> Thus my view differs from that of Glenn Lesses, who (as I explain below) understands the positive value of *promoted* indifferents in particular in terms of their instrumental contribution to virtue.

of early Stoic theory. Stoic claims about indifferents have seemed puzzling at best and contradictory at worst. In attempting to make sense of Stoic doctrine, a reconstruction that reconciles the eudaimonist basis of Stoicism with claims about the value of indifferents is clearly needed. The main attraction of the account I will offer is that it vindicates the basic coherence of the Stoic position, as other interpretations have not, and does so in a way that illuminates its connections with Stoic moral psychology. In particular, it shows how the Stoics can offer, consistently with their fundamental axiological commitments, an analysis of rational motivation that escapes the dilemma framed by the ancient sources. If this account is correct, many of the criticisms eventually formulated by the Academy can be seen to rest on a conflation of distinct roles the older Stoics assign to virtue and indifferents.

Surviving characterizations of indifferents are for the most part negative, so that it is easier to show what the role of indifferents in Stoic theory is not than to provide a detailed positive account of the doctrine. My argument in what follows is partly from elimination, focusing on the inadequacies of alternative accounts. I first set out the central evidence for the Stoic view and examine its claims in greater detail. I then argue that the main interpretations accepted by recent commentators either fail to fit this evidence or fail to cohere with the basic motivations that underlie the Stoic position. The final part of my paper develops in greater detail the account I have outlined above. If we attend carefully to the broader commitments of Stoic theory and to the Stoics' cognitive account of motivation in particular, it should be possible to make sense of the claim that promoted indifferents, though no part of the human good, are pursued by rational agents whenever circumstances allow.

## 2. The doctrine of promoted indifferents

Orthodox Stoicism is committed to two claims: (1) that virtue alone is good, and (2) that some things that are not good are nevertheless in accordance with nature and promoted. Both claims remain at the core of Stoic ethical thought throughout most of the school's history, and they are at least partly intelligible as a development of two Socratic principles: that virtue is sufficient for happiness, and that

virtue is a craft consisting in a type of expert knowledge.<sup>12</sup> If virtue is the only thing required for happiness, this explains the respect in which other items are indifferent. But if virtue is a form of technical knowledge, understood on the model of the crafts, it must have something to accomplish and some material with which to work.<sup>13</sup>

The general import of the Stoic doctrine is therefore Socratic, but the older Stoics also claim, as Plato's Socrates does not, that the human good may be described as living according to nature. According to the Chrysippean formula, this means that the content of the human good is constrained by a correct account of human nature and by an understanding of its place within the rationally organized cosmos as a whole (D.L. 7. 89). This thesis is importantly connected to the doctrine of indifferents, since the Stoics characterize promoted indifferents as those objects or states of affairs that accord with nature (*kata phusin/secundum naturam*) and dispromoted indifferents as those that do not. The promoted status of some in-

<sup>12</sup> For the former claim see D.L. 7. 127 (SVF i. 187), Cic. *Tusc.* 2. 29–30 (SVF i. 185). For the latter see S.E. *M.* 7. 227 (SVF ii. 56); 11. 110–11. Cf. SVF i. 73; ii. 94; iii. 516. For discussion of both see G. Striker, 'Plato's Socrates and the Stoics', in Striker, *Essays*, 316–24; A. A. Long, 'Socrates in Hellenistic Philosophy', *Classical Quarterly*, ns 38 (1988), 150–71. The later Stoics Panaetius and Posidonius may have softened their commitment to the first claim, but the evidence for this is inconclusive (see D.L. 7. 103 and Cic. *Fin.* 4. 23; but cf. *Tusc.* 2. 61–2). Kidd doubts that Panaetius or Posidonius made changes of any consequence ('Intermediates', 158–63). Zeno's student Aristo of Chios argued that there was no distinction to be drawn between promoted and dispromoted indifferents, but Chrysippus took considerable pains to refute his view: S.E. *M.* 11. 64 ff. (SVF i. 361); D.L. 7. 160 (SVF i. 351); Cic. *Fin.* 3. 50 (SVF i. 365).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Plato, *Chrm.* 165 E–166 A. The motivations behind the Stoics' development of the indifferents doctrine are not easy to recover. A line of argument from the *Euthydemus* (279–81) is clearly relevant (cf. D.L. 7. 103; S.E. *M.* 11. 61), as commentators have often observed. But the *Euthydemus* argument is hardly adequate on its own to bear the full weight of the Stoic thesis. Socrates there argues that wisdom is beneficial in every case but external resources only in some. He then concludes either that external resources are not goods (281 E) or that they are only conditional goods (292 B). At no point, however, does the *Euthydemus* establish or even assume the much stronger Stoic conclusion that external resources are never beneficial. As Tad Brennan observes, it is one thing to argue, on the grounds that external resources benefit only conditionally, that they are not genuine goods. It is quite another to maintain that they never benefit at all (*The Stoic Life*, 132 n. 4). John Cooper has suggested a more fundamental rationale for the indifferents doctrine: the thesis that health and wealth, pain and poverty are indifferent is a consequence of the Stoics' attempt to reconcile their understanding of nature as a rational and providential order with the fact that this order has not been arranged in such a way that agents may infallibly attain these things ('Eudaimonism', 273–5). Cf. J. Cooper, *Pursuits of Wisdom: Six Ways of Life in Ancient Philosophy from Socrates to Plotinus [Pursuits]* (Princeton, 2012), 175–80.

different things is a product of nature's design: promoted indifferents are those that tend to stimulate *hormai*, the motivational impulses that follow on assent to an impression that a token action is appropriate (*kathēkon*), the one to perform (D.L. 7. 104; Stob. *Ecl.* 2. 79; Cic. *Fin.* 4. 59).<sup>14</sup> Within the class of indifferents, then, those objects that tend to attract or repel us are promoted and dispromoted, respectively, while those that do neither comprise a third category of thoroughly indifferent things. Health and wealth are standard Stoic examples of the promoted, sickness and poverty of the dispromoted. Extending one's finger or the number of hairs on one's head are thoroughly indifferent.<sup>15</sup>

This classification figures importantly in a further topic of central importance to Stoic ethical theory, the notion of appropriate actions or functions (*ta kathēkonta/officia*). The category of the *kathēkon* extends to plants and non-rational animals as well as to human agents, but the Stoics hold that in the human case an appropriate action is one for which a reasonable defence (*εὐλογος ἀπολογία*) can be given (Stob. *Ecl.* 2. 85).<sup>16</sup> Appropriate action in human beings, therefore, is action that is in some way responsive to rational considerations. The Stoics, moreover, appear to regard the appropriate actions performed by a non-sage as extensionally equivalent to the actions that a fully virtuous agent would perform, the difference between them consisting wholly in the disposition from which the agent acts. Virtuous action is appropriate action done in the way that a fully rational agent would do it, on the basis of a true and stable set of beliefs about the order of nature and the character of goodness. We can usefully think of an appropriate action, perhaps, as the action that an ideally rational agent such as the Stoic sage

<sup>14</sup> In claiming that promoted indifferents stimulate impulse, the Stoics cannot mean that merely recognizing or conceiving of an object in one's field of action as promoted is sufficient to generate an impulse towards it. However the relation between indifferents and impulse is understood, it needs to be squared with the further Stoic claim that impulse is precipitated not by judgements about indifferents *per se* but by judgements about the appropriateness of *actions* (Stob. *Ecl.* 2. 86). Moreover, promoted indifferents are clearly to be avoided or deselected under certain circumstances (D.L. 7. 109; S.E. *M.* 11. 65–6). This feature of the Stoic theory confirms that there is no simple correspondence between the recognition of their promoted status and the generation of impulse in rational agents.

<sup>15</sup> Stob. *Ecl.* 2. 79; S.E. *M.* 11. 59; D.L. 7. 109. The status of this last category of thoroughly indifferent things is not entirely clear. The Stoics' own examples seem to suggest states of affairs or action types rather than object types or conditions such as health and wealth.

<sup>16</sup> Cicero renders *εὐλογος ἀπολογία* as *probabilis ratio* at *Fin.* 3. 58.

would advise one to perform in a given case (cf. Plut. *Stoic. repugn.* 1037 E–F).

It is clear, finally, that a reasonable defence of appropriate action must somehow refer to the value and disvalue of indifferents. According to Plutarch, Chrysippus maintained that indifferents are the subject-matter (*hulē*) of virtue and the *archē* of *kathēkonta* (Plut. *Comm. not.* 1069 E–1070 A; 1071 B). This appears to mean both that indifferents will be the material with which appropriate activity deals and that the status of indifferents will have some bearing on a determination of appropriate action (*SVF* iii. 114, 763, 766).<sup>17</sup> The close connection between indifferents and *kathēkonta* fits the division of our doxographical sources, which regularly group the two topics together (Stob. *Ecl.* 2. 85. 15; D.L. 7. 104–10). The categories of promoted and dispromoted indifferents thus play a basic role in the Stoic characterization of rational agency: they figure fundamentally in the deliberations of the rational agent who seeks to conform to nature and in the reasonable account she would give, if pressed, to justify her actions.<sup>18</sup>

Some taxonomies of indifferents draw a number of further distinctions, perhaps representing later and fuller articulations of the Stoic doctrine. Some promoted indifferents are internal (some psychological tendencies are promoted in relation to others, for instance), while others are external. Some are promoted as instrumental or productive means to other promoted indifferents, some are promoted for their own sake, and some for both. Stoic texts maintain that indifferents are promoted when they possess a certain positive degree of *axia*, or value, and the later Stoic Anti-

<sup>17</sup> In his response to Aristo Chrysippus evidently argued that eliminating the distinction between promoted and dispromoted indifferents deprives virtue of its content: “What then”, says [Chrysippus], “will be my point of departure, and what shall I take as duty’s principle [τοῦ καθήκοντος ἀρχήν] and virtue’s matter [ἔλην τῆς ἀρετῆς], once I have abandoned nature and conformity to nature?” (*Comm. not.* 1069 E, trans. Cherniss). Cf. *Comm. not.* 1071 B: “[F]or the prudent selection and acceptance of those things is the goal, whereas the things themselves and the obtaining of them are not the goal but are given as a kind of matter [ἔλη] having selective value [ἐκλεκτικὴν ἀξίαν]” (trans. Cherniss). On Aristo’s account see G. Boys-Stones, ‘The ἐπελευστικὴ δύναμις in Aristo’s Psychology of Action’, *Phronesis*, 41 (1996), 75–94; A. M. Ioppolo, ‘Chrysippus and the Action Theory of Aristo of Chios’, in B. Inwood and R. Kamtekar (eds.), *Virtue and Happiness: Essays in Honour of Julia Annas* (*Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, suppl.; Oxford, 2012), 197–222.

<sup>18</sup> Recent discussions of Stoic deliberation include J. Cooper, ‘Greek Philosophers on Euthanasia and Suicide’, in id., *Reason and Emotion: Essays on Ancient Moral Psychology and Ethical Theory* (Princeton, 1999), 9–38; Barney, ‘Puzzle’; Brennan, *The Stoic Life*, chs. 11–13.

pater is said to have introduced the term *axia eklektikē*, selective value, to further characterize what is promoted (Stob. *Ecl.* 2. 83).<sup>19</sup> Finally, the Stoics underscore the difference between the goodness of virtue and the selective value of promoted indifferents with a terminological distinction they are careful to observe. What is promoted is to be selected (*ληπτόν/selegendum*), but only the good, understood as virtue, is to be chosen (*αίρετόν/expetendum*).

Ancient critics seem to have attacked the Stoic position early on and from both sides, sometimes challenging the claim that only virtue is good, sometimes the claim that promoted indifferents have value.<sup>20</sup> Many of the criticisms preserved by Cicero, Plutarch, and Alexander appear to derive from those advanced by Carneades in the second century.<sup>21</sup> Central to Carneades' criticisms of the indifferents doctrine is the thesis that every *technē* must be directed towards a practical objective distinct from the skill itself. Since the Stoics hold that virtue is a *technē*, they ought to concede either that promoted indifferents should be included together with virtue in a mixed account of the end or that they constitute a further goal of rational action, generating a second *telos*. One way or another, these criticisms imply, the Stoics must regard indifferents as practical objectives whose value justifies the effort to secure them. In *De finibus* Cicero appropriates this line of attack on behalf of the Antiochean view, according to which happiness comes in degrees and may be augmented by external advantages, which constitute genuine goods (*Fin.* 5. 68–70; cf. *Tusc.* 5. 21–3). Alexander and Plutarch similarly employ it to defend a mixed conception of the human good, one

<sup>19</sup> Apparently in response to the attacks of Carneades, who defended an account according to which the human good consists in *achieving* indifferents (Cic. *Acad.* 2. 131; *Tusc.* 5. 84–5; *Fin.* 4. 15; 5. 20).

<sup>20</sup> According to Plutarch, 'it was said by some in earlier times that Zeno was in the predicament of a man with wine gone sour, which he could sell neither as vinegar nor as wine, for there is no disposing of Zeno's "promoted" either as good or as indifferent' (*Stoic. repugn.* 1047 E, trans. Cherniss).

<sup>21</sup> Thus Gisela Striker observes, 'Since Antipater is said to have also used the selection-formula, the simplest assumption is that the arguments [against the Stoic *telos*] we find in Cicero, Plutarch, and Alexander of Aphrodisias all stem from the controversy between Carneades and Antipater' ('Antipater', 301). For the Carneadean background to the criticisms of *De finibus* 5 see Schofield, 'Writing', 79–80; Striker, 'Antipater', 306–7, 311–15; Striker, 'Following Nature: A Study in Stoic Ethics', in Striker, *Essays*, 221–80 at 261 ff. On the Carneadean arguments in Alexander's *Mantissa* see Striker, 'Antipater', 313–14, and R. W. Sharples, *Alexander of Aphrodisias: Supplement to On the Soul* (Ithaca, NY, 2004), 182 n. 615 and 187 n. 632. On Plutarch's use of Carneades see Striker, 'Antipater', 302–6. Cf. Plut. *Comm. not.* 1072 F.

incorporating both virtue and external resources in a single account of the end (*Mant.* 159–61 Bruns; *Comm. not.* 1069 E–1072 F).

Little direct evidence survives to show how later Stoics responded to these criticisms or whether they represent older Stoic views fairly. In the next section I consider and criticize three ways in which commentators have reconstructed the Stoic doctrine in an effort to make sense of the relation of indifferents to virtue. I argue that each of these interpretations is either inconsistent with important textual evidence or fails to cohere, in much the way Carneades seems to have emphasized, with the eudaimonist framework of Stoicism.

### 3. Promoted indifferents as commensurate with goodness

One way for promoted indifferents to have value is in the way that goodness has value. That is to say, we might try to understand the distinction the Stoics draw between the value of goodness and the value of promoted indifferents as one of degree, not kind. Commentators have occasionally suggested this view, and some of the examples the Stoics employ suggest it.<sup>22</sup> In explaining the Stoic position Cicero writes:

[T1] [The value of material advantages] is like the light of a lamp eclipsed and obliterated by the rays of the sun; like a drop of honey lost in the vastness of the Aegean Sea; a penny added to the wealth of Croesus or a single step on the road from here to India. Such is the value of bodily goods that it is unavoidably eclipsed, overwhelmed, and destroyed by the splendour and grandeur of virtue as the Stoic candidate for the highest good. (*Fin.* 3. 45, trans. Woolf)

<sup>22</sup> Annas seems to recognize this possibility when she suggests that ‘virtue is not straightforwardly incommensurate with other things, in the sense of not being on the same scale at all’ (‘Ancient Ethics and Modern Morality’, in J. Tomberlain (ed.), *Ethics* (Philosophical Perspectives, 6; Northridge, Calif., 1992), 119–36 at 122). On the other hand, Annas elsewhere says that they *are* incommensurate: ‘What is chosen is not, strictly, preferred over what is selected, since they manifest different kinds of value; they are not on the same scale for deliberation to be able to prefer one over the other’ (‘Aristotle and Kant on Morality and Practical Reasoning’, in S. Engstrom and J. Whiting (eds.), *Aristotle, Kant and the Stoics* (Cambridge, 1996), 237–58 at 241). Michael Frede writes that the sage’s failure to attain the indifferents he pursues will be ‘a very minor loss, since the value of what he failed to obtain does not even begin to shift the balance if compared in weightiness to the rationality he maintained in being impelled towards the object he failed to obtain’ (‘The Stoic Doctrine of Affections of the Soul’, in M. Schofield and G. Striker (eds.), *The Norms of Nature: Studies in Hellenistic Ethics* [Norms] (Cambridge, 1986), 93–112 at 110).

These similes imply that although the weight of promoted indifferents is vanishingly small in comparison with virtue, virtue and indifferents are nevertheless to be weighed on the same scale. Eclipsed though it may be by the sun, the light of a lamp is still light, and a step on the way to India is still part of the journey to India.

Such comparisons seem to support the view that although the value of promoted indifferents is slight, it is nonetheless commensurable with goodness and can be included in an aggregate of both.<sup>23</sup> We might wonder, then, whether the Stoics mean only to emphasize the comparative indifference of health and wealth but not to claim that they are altogether lacking in goodness. There are at least two ways in which such an account might be understood. It might be that promoted indifferents are unconditionally good, so that health and wealth are small but nonetheless genuine goods whether or not they are actually conjoined with virtue. On this interpretation both virtuous and vicious agents stand to benefit to at least some degree from external resources, since the virtuous use of these resources is not a condition of their benefiting an agent. Alternatively, the Stoics might argue that health and wealth are goods only when conjoined with virtue. On this interpretation, the Stoics would share a view sometimes attributed to Socrates and evidently accepted by Antiochus: that although virtue alone suffices for happiness, virtue and external goods together bring about a greater degree of happiness, however slight.<sup>24</sup> That is to say, the virtuous man is happy, but the virtuous rich man is *happier*, if only because his wealth secures a greater scope for virtue. On either of these accounts, virtue may remain the single most important part of happiness, but the former account concedes, while the latter denies, that health and wealth are unconditionally good for their possessor.

Neither of these understandings is consistent with other features of the Stoic view that are explicit in our texts, however. If goodness belongs to indifferents, even conditionally, the Stoics must treat goodness itself as aggregative, so that the goodness of virtue when conjoined with health and wealth will outweigh the goodness of virtue alone. But this cannot be the Stoic position, for though

<sup>23</sup> Terence Irwin, indeed, has suggested that although the Stoics exclude indifferents from their conception of *happiness*, they nonetheless recognize a ‘Total’ aggregate of rational objectives: happiness together with the life according to nature. See Irwin, ‘Stoic and Aristotelian Conceptions of Happiness’ [‘Conceptions’], in Schofield and Striker (eds.), *Norms*, 205–44 at 236–39.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Vlastos, ‘Happiness’, 214–24.

the Stoics concede that health and wealth may be used well in conjunction with virtue, they deny that virtue and happiness admit of degrees. Since goodness is coextensive with virtue on their account, the goodness of virtue also does not admit of degrees and so cannot be augmented in any way (cf. Cic. *Fin.* 5. 83). These further Stoic commitments make it clear that the value of promoted indifferents cannot be added to the value of virtue, and Cicero elsewhere rules out a distinction of degree in explicit terms: ‘Value (the Greek ἀξία) is not counted amongst goods nor again amongst evils, so it will remain in its own category, however much you add to it. Hence the particular value of virtue is distinct: a matter of kind, not degree’ (*Fin.* 3. 34–5, trans. Woolf). The long list of predicates the Stoics ascribe to virtue but deny to what is promoted further confirms this view. A difference of degree is not the distinction the Stoics have in mind.

#### 4. Promoted indifferents as an instrumental means to virtue

A second way in which promoted indifferents might be of value is as non-constitutive but instrumental means to virtue. Michael Frede seems to accept a view along these lines, suggesting that ‘desire for them in a rational person can only be the desire for them as mere means to the good’.<sup>25</sup> Glenn Lesses has developed an explicitly instrumentalist account, taking two passages in particular to support his reading:<sup>26</sup>

[T2] They [sc. the Stoics] say that one sort of value [is] a contribution [σύνβλησιν] to the consistent life, which is [the case] concerning every good; another is a power [δύναμιν] which contributes as intermediary [μέσσην] to the life in accordance with nature, as much as to say whatever [value] health or wealth bring forward to the life in accordance with nature. (D.L. 7. 105, trans. Lesses)<sup>27</sup>

[T3] They say that *aestimabile* [the valuable] (for thus, I think, we should

<sup>25</sup> ‘On the Stoic Conception of the Good’, in K. Ierodiakonou (ed.), *Topics in Stoic Philosophy* (Oxford, 1999), 71–94 at 92.

<sup>26</sup> I am much indebted to Lesses’s article, despite the criticisms offered here.

<sup>27</sup> Although Diogenes does say that the value of promoted indifferents depends on an intermediate δύναμις, which Lesses translates as ‘power’, the Greek term is not restricted to a causal or instrumental notion. In this context it is perhaps better translated merely as ‘property’ or ‘quality’, while acknowledging that the sense in which this quality ‘brings something forward’ in connection with following nature remains to be seen.

translate it) is that which is either itself in accordance with nature or produces something that is of this kind—so that it is worthy of choice on account of the fact that it has some weight worthy of *aestimatio*, which they call *axia*. On the other hand the *inaestimabile* is that which is contrary to the above. (Cic. *Fin.* 3. 20, trans. Lesses)

The first of these passages occurs in the taxonomy of indifferents preserved by Diogenes Laertius. The second belongs to a passage from *De finibus* 3 in which Cicero describes the way in which the notion of goodness is first acquired, according to the Stoics. On the basis of these passages Lesses argues that indifferents are an ‘instrumental means to the constituents of the life in accordance with nature’ and therefore a causal means to what is good.<sup>28</sup> This reading is attractive in that it clearly captures a salient feature of the Stoic account: it explains why the value of promoted indifferents cannot *conflict* in any way with the goodness of virtue. If the value of indifferents depends on their instrumental contribution to virtue, clearly it cannot be rational to pursue indifferents at the expense of virtue. So an instrumental reading precludes the prospect of conflicts and trade-offs between virtue and indifferents in just the way the Stoics emphasize.

There is a straightforward argument against construing the Stoic position in this way, however: it conflicts with an identity claim the Stoics also accept, that happiness *consists* in conformity to nature, together with their well-attested doctrine that indifferents are not required for happiness. Immediately before [T2] Diogenes says clearly that indifferents do not contribute to happiness or misery (D.L. 7. 104). Attempts to argue on the basis of this passage that indifferents are a means to living according to nature face the immediate difficulty that the same passage denies, along with many others, that indifferents are a means to *happiness* (Stob. *Ecl.* 2. 84; S.E. *M.* 11. 61). Aware of this difficulty, Lesses argues that the Stoics ‘endorse a more subtle and complex instrumentalism’ according to which the worth of indifferents depends on their causal role in the formation of the ‘ethical dispositions’ in which virtue consists. Lesses associates this causal role with promoted indifferents in particular: their positive value derives from their role in the formation of the concepts required for virtue.<sup>29</sup> It is never made clear, however, how this account, subtle though it may be, is to be

<sup>28</sup> Lesses, ‘Virtue’, 106.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 105: ‘The initial objects of desire have a complicated causal role in leading

squared with the Stoics' explicit denial that promoted indifferents are a causal means to the happiness that follows on virtue and the life according to nature.

Nor does [T3] support an instrumental account of the relation of indifferents to goodness. Lesses suggests that this passage 'clarifies the discussion of value [found in Diogenes]' and 'confirms the distinction between the value ascribed to whatever is intrinsically worthwhile, viz. goods, and the value ascribed to whatever is an intermediate contributor to the consistent life, viz. promoted indifferents'.<sup>30</sup> This construal rests on a misunderstanding, however, because in this passage Cicero is not drawing a distinction between the instrumental value of promoted indifferents and the final value of the goods they produce, but a distinction between instrumental and final categories of value *within* the class of promoted indifferents. Two considerations confirm this. First, the Latin Lesses translates as 'worthy of choice' (*selectione dignum*) ought rather to be translated as 'worthy of selection'. For as I have noted, the Stoics observe a terminological distinction between what is to be chosen (*αἰρετόν/expetendum*) and what is to be selected (*ληπτόν/selegendum*), and Cicero is careful to conform to this usage throughout *De finibus*.<sup>31</sup> Second, the context of the passage makes it clear that Cicero is not suggesting that promoted indifferents are a means to virtue, but only that some promoted indifferents (such as wealth) are a means to securing other promoted indifferents (such as health). Both Diogenes Laertius and Stobaeus record the same distinction between productive and final categories of value *within* the class of promoted indifferents, and Cicero himself draws it at *De finibus* 3. 56.<sup>32</sup>

Cicero's discussion of indifferents in the *De finibus*, then,

agents to make the ascent and to modify their beliefs about what is fully natural for them.' They 'help cause something else—namely, moral virtue—that is intrinsically in accord with nature' (122).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 108.

<sup>31</sup> Other sources occasionally confuse the Stoic terms, but in *De finibus* Cicero does not. As he says explicitly at 3. 22: what is indifferent is 'seligendum, non expetendum'. Cf. *Fin.* 5. 90.

<sup>32</sup> Rackham's Loeb translation, which here and elsewhere renders *referre* as 'to be a means to', has perhaps encouraged this confusion. Thus Rackham describes the good as 'the End to which all else is a means' (239). Woolf more accurately translates, 'to which everything else ought to be directed', since *y* can be directed or referred to *x* without being a means to *x*. Cf. *Tusc.* 5. 48: 'Refert autem omnia ad beate vivendum; beata igitur vita laudabilis.'

provides no basis for the claim that promoted indifferents stand in an instrumental relation to virtue. It rather sets out a basic division between the good, which is to be praised and chosen for its own sake (*per se laudandum et expetendum*), and the promoted, which may be selected either for its final value (*sumendum propter se*) or for the sake of its utility (*sumendum propter eius usum*). To suppose that Cicero is here describing an instrumental relation between goods and indifferents is to conflate these distinctions, treating the difference between promoted indifferents with final value and those with instrumental value as the distinction between the promoted and the good.

In general, the suggestion that the value of promoted indifferents depends on an instrumental contribution to virtue appears plausible only if one considers some Stoic texts in isolation from others.<sup>33</sup> Since the Stoics do acknowledge that indifferents are the material with which virtue works, the possibility of selecting some indifferents rather than others is a *sine qua non* of virtuous activity, as I have noted. But the fact that virtuous action always involves a selection among whatever indifferents are available does not show that promoted indifferents in particular are valuable as means to virtue, nor that some configurations of indifferents are more conducive to living virtuously than others. If the Stoics concede that health and wealth contribute causally to virtue and the life according to nature, they have some reason to treat these objects as instrumental goods and therefore to regard them either as constituents of happiness or as means to it. But Stoic texts firmly reject this possibility.

##### 5. Promoted indifferents as intrinsically valuable

I have so far argued that the value the Stoics attribute to promoted indifferents is incommensurable with goodness and also that it does not depend on an instrumental contribution to virtue. Interpretations to the contrary are incompatible with the available evidence, and few commentators have defended them at length. I want now to consider the suggestion that promoted indifferents instantiate

<sup>33</sup> As Rachel Barney observes, an instrumental account of the sort sketched by Lesses gives indifferents ‘a much closer connection to the good of virtue than is compatible with the profound separation between the two on which both the Stoics and their critics insist’ (‘Puzzle’, 313 n. 20). Cf. *Fin.* 4. 43.

a form of intrinsic value, a kind of value that does not depend on any relation to virtue and goodness. Long and Sedley seem to adopt a view along these lines. They suggest that there are ‘intrinsic differences of value’ between indifferents that accord with nature and those contrary to nature. They variously characterize these differences as ‘objective’, ‘a feature of the world’, as residing in the ‘natural preferability of health to sickness’, and as based on ‘intrinsic preferability’.<sup>34</sup> Such characterizations suggest that the value of promoted indifferents should be understood to be unconditional and non-derivative, since it does not depend on any relation to or conjunction with virtue.<sup>35</sup> On this account, the Stoics appear to be committed to a kind of axiological dualism. One kind of value, goodness, is necessary and sufficient for happiness and belongs to virtue and virtuous activity. A second kind of value, promoted or selective value, constitutes a distinct form of worth rooted in external objects and conditions that answer to the needs and constitution of human beings but whose possession makes no contribution to the happy life.

It is difficult to object to this interpretation on narrowly textual grounds. The sources unambiguously ascribe value (*axia*) to indifferents, and they firmly connect this value to the notion of what accords with nature, to conditions and states of affairs that are *kata phusin*. The challenge is rather to make sense of the relevant notion of value in a way that does not generate intolerable conflicts with other basic commitments of Stoic theory. Contemporary accounts of intrinsic value are deeply bound up with conceptions of rational justification and with the notion of normative practical reasons in particular.<sup>36</sup> Such accounts standardly analyse

<sup>34</sup> See A. A. Long and D. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol. i [LS] (Cambridge, 1987), 357–59.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. also A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy* (Berkeley, 1986), 71–94; Kidd, ‘Intermediates’; J. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1969), 11–14; F. Sandbach, *The Stoics* (New York, 1975), 28–9; B. Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism [Ethics]* (Oxford, 1985), 198 and 208–10. According to Nicholas Wolterstorff, some indifferents ‘must have intrinsic value if the Stoic way of thinking of virtue is not to be fundamentally incoherent’ (*Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (Princeton, 2008), 163 n. 26).

<sup>36</sup> By ‘normative’ I intend to mark a contrast with explanatory reasons. By ‘practical’ I intend to mark a contrast with epistemic reasons. In speaking of intrinsic and extrinsic value, I intend the distinction articulated by e.g. Christine Korsgaard, ‘Two Distinctions in Goodness’, *Philosophical Review*, 92 (1983), 169–95, and more recently by Rae Langton in ‘Objective and Unconditioned Value’, *Philosophical Review*, 116 (2007), 157–85. On this account, extrinsic value is ‘the value a thing has

value in terms of normative reasons or normative reasons in terms of value.<sup>37</sup> This association of value and practical reasons is a natural one, and it is difficult to envision a coherent alternative: if the value borne by some object or state of affairs is not tied to any reason to pursue or promote it, it is hard to see why we should care about intrinsic value or what the practical relevance of value ascriptions could be. In view of the close association between value and reasons for action, it is an easy step from the characterization of promoted indifferents as intrinsically valuable to the supposition that the Stoics view promoted indifferents as rational objectives in their own right and, accordingly, that promoted indifferents constitute a source of normative practical reasons that justify action and motivation without reference to the good.<sup>38</sup> This explication of the Stoic view, which understands the value of indifferents in terms of

from another source' (Langton, 160). This is a broader category than that of instrumentally valuable things. It might include artefacts, symbols, or tokens, for example (Langton suggests that a wedding ring is valued for the sake of one's spouse, but not as an instrument to any further end). If this distinction is accepted, an object may have derivative but non-instrumental value, or it may have value as an instrumental means to something whose value is derivative but non-instrumental. This is an important point, because the Stoics draw a distinction between instrumental and final value *within* the category of promoted indifferents. None of them is valuable independently of virtue, however.

<sup>37</sup> Most ancient views seem to fall more naturally into the former category, but this point is irrelevant here. What is relevant is the generally assumed material connection between value and the normative reasons that justify motivation and action. Thus Scanlon writes, 'to claim that something is valuable (or that it is "of value") is to claim that others also have reason to value it, as you do' (*What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge Mass., 1998), 95). For further discussion of the relation between intrinsic value and normative reasons see e.g. R. Audi, 'Intrinsic Value and Reasons for Action', *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, suppl. 41 (2003), 30–56; R. Crisp, 'Value, Reasons, and the Structure of Justification: How to Avoid Passing the Buck', *Analysis*, 65 (2005), 80–5; S. Darwall, 'Moore, Normativity, and Intrinsic Value', *Ethics*, 113 (2003), 468–89; R. Wedgwood, 'Intrinsic Values and Reasons for Action', *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 41 (2009), 30–56.

<sup>38</sup> To be clear, I believe that the language of reasons and rationality is appropriate as a way to characterize the Stoic commitment to eudaimonism and the rational imperative to conform to nature, on which *eudaimonia* depends. The sage is an ideally rational agent, and Stoic sources make *eudaimonia* the final object of *ᾀρεξίς*, or rational motivation (e.g. Stob. *Ecl.* 2. 76=SVF iii. 3). My objection in this section is not to talk of practical reasons and rationality as a way of explicating the Stoic view, but to the further assumption that the value of *indifferents* can be understood in these terms, as instantiating a form of value that makes them a source of practical reasons not grounded in the rational pursuit of happiness. This assumption is clearest in Irwin's account, but I think it is assumed, with various degrees of explicitness, in much recent work. I believe this further assumption is most plausibly traced to Carneades, rather than the Stoics, and that it obscures the older Chrysippean account.

reasons for action, is central to several influential accounts.<sup>39</sup> It is perhaps the dominant view now taken in the literature, at least implicitly.

Two consequences of the intrinsic-value reading should be noted, however. In the first place, it implies that the value of what accords with nature and the normative reasons one has for pursuing what accords with nature do not ultimately depend on the value of *eudaimonia* and on the virtue in which *eudaimonia* consists. Such a view effectively extends the scope of rational justification beyond the scope of the human *telos* as the Stoics conceive it, introducing an array of practical objectives to be weighed and considered for their own sake but whose attainment has no bearing on an agent's happiness. If this is the Stoic position, it amounts to a rejection of rational eudaimonism as that doctrine is often understood. By itself this upshot does not constitute a decisive objection to the intrinsic-value reading: the Stoics might have independent reasons for rejecting or modifying the framework of rational eudaimonism, as some commentators have argued.

A second feature of this account, however, is that the resulting view of Stoicism seems to fit the polemical characterizations adopted by the Academy, which accuse the Stoics of treating promoted indifferents as goods under another name. Once the supposition that promoted indifferents are intrinsically valuable begins to be developed in concrete ways, it is difficult to see how the Stoic position differs in substance from a broadly Aristotelian view that treats them as genuine goods. It is of course conceivable that Stoic claims about indifferents *do* support an essentially Aristotelian account and that, whatever the Stoics themselves may say, they are substantively committed to such a position, as Cicero sometimes maintains (*Fin.* 4. 22–4; cf. *Plut. Comm. not.* 1072 D). As I have indicated, however, I think this picture is deeply misleading, both because it fits poorly with our evidence and because a more charitable account of early Stoicism is available. The problem with the

<sup>39</sup> For instance, Julia Annas writes as follows: 'The Stoics take it that we can, in the normal course of development of human nature, come to appreciate a rational point of view from which we grasp the force of reasons for action which apply to us, but are distinct in kind from reasons that merely satisfy our own needs; and that this is the viewpoint of virtue, from which we appreciate the distinctive value of virtue. For in any given case, appreciating the special value of virtue will be the same as my having a reason to act on which is distinct from, and overrides, other reasons I have in terms of my own desires and projects' (*The Morality of Happiness* [*Morality*] (Oxford, 1993), 171).

intrinsic-value reading is not simply that it regards the Stoics as Aristotelians in spite of themselves—though that is a disappointing feature of the view—but also that it is hard to square with the motivations that seem to underwrite the Stoic exclusion of indifferents from the human *telos* in the first place. It is difficult to avoid the suspicion that some crucial element of the older Stoic position has been overlooked.

To see this, it is useful to consider Terence Irwin's reading, which develops with precision and subtlety the suggestion that indifferents instantiate a form of non-instrumental value.<sup>40</sup> In developing this view, Irwin takes himself to be developing the account suggested by Long and Sedley.<sup>41</sup> Long and Sedley might object to some of the implications Irwin draws out, but it is difficult to see how they can avoid them if they are prepared to accept the supposition that promoted and dispromoted indifferents ground reasons for action in their own right. According to Irwin's account, the Stoics effectively embrace one horn of the dilemma offered to them by the Academy, abandoning a commitment to rational eudaimonism as it is often understood. Thus Irwin writes that the Stoic position 'will sound odd if we accept the eudaimonist claim (accepted by Socrates, Plato and Aristotle) that all objects of rational concern must be included in happiness'.<sup>42</sup> The Stoics suppose 'that value does not depend on relation to an end; it may also be conferred by relation to an objective; and the life according to nature is the objective that confers value on preferred indifferents'.<sup>43</sup> Thus the Stoics can 'quite easily agree' with

<sup>40</sup> In fairness to Irwin, I should emphasize that I am here offering a composite account of his position, one I have assembled by considering books and articles he has written across a number of years. I hope it does not misrepresent views he has held in the past or continues to hold, but I should acknowledge this possibility.

<sup>41</sup> See T. H. Irwin, *The Development of Ethics: A Historical and Critical Study*, i. *From Socrates to the Reformation* [DOE] (Oxford, 2007), 326 n. 50.

<sup>42</sup> T. H. Irwin, 'Socratic Paradox and Stoic Theory', in S. Everson (ed.), *Ethics* (Companions to Ancient Thought, 4; Cambridge, 1998), 151–92 at 174.

<sup>43</sup> Irwin, 'Conceptions', 235. Irwin defends this distinction between end and objective in part by appealing to the model of stochastic skills. The suggestion that the Stoics compare virtue to a skill such as archery, and that they therefore regard it as analogous to a stochastic skill, is ultimately due to Otto Rieth, who bases it on a contestable reading of *De finibus* 3 and on a supposed resemblance between one of Antipater's accounts of the Stoic end and Aristotle's account of crafts such as medicine and oratory ('Über das Telos der Stoiker', *Hermes*, 69 (1934), 13–45). Rieth's suggestion has been developed by A. A. Long ('Carneades') and accepted by M. Soreth ('Die zweite Telos-Formel des Antipater von Tarsus', *Archiv für Geschichte*

Carneades' assertion that a rational agent may cultivate a concern for indifferents that does not depend on her concern for virtue.<sup>44</sup> On Irwin's reading, then, the Stoics hold both (1) that happiness is sufficient for virtue and (2) that promoted indifferents instantiate a form of non-instrumental value to which independent rational weight must be given. Although promoted indifferents do not contribute to the end of happiness, they do contribute to the objective of living according to nature, and this contribution gives rational agents non-eudaimonist reasons for pursuing them.<sup>45</sup>

I think a case can be made, for reasons Irwin himself brings out, that Chrysippus is unlikely to have intended (2) in a way that treats promoted indifferents as practical objectives that constitute a rational aim in their own right, without reference to the goodness of virtue. To see this, consider one of the central motivations that, as Irwin observes, appears to underwrite the indifferents doctrine in older Stoic theory. According to Plutarch, Chrysippus argued against both Plato and Aristotle that justice cannot be established—neither in the individual case nor in society as a whole—if objectives such as pleasure and health are treated as parts of the human *telos* (*Stoic. repugn.* 1040 C–E). Similar claims figure prominently in a wide range of Stoic texts, and they presumably mean, as Irwin sug-

*der Philosophie*, 50 (1968), 48–72), among others. It is now widely disseminated in the literature on Stoicism and has shaped interpretations of Stoic ethics in substantive ways. See e.g. Wolterstorff, *Justice*, 166: 'Virtues, [the Stoics] held, are stochastic skills.' I believe the association of Stoic virtue and stochastic skills probably originated with Carneades rather than the Stoics and that the archery analogy of *De finibus* 3 has been misunderstood. I argue for this claim in 'Of Archery and Virtue: Ancient and Modern Conceptions of Value', *Philosophers' Imprint*, 14.9 (June 2014), 1–16.

<sup>44</sup> Irwin, 'Conceptions', 231. Irwin may sometimes seem to suggest that the value of the end *depends* on the value of indifferents: 'We would not have the end if we were not concerned with the external result [i.e. securing indifferents]' (*ibid.*).

<sup>45</sup> In effect, Irwin's reading of Stoic ethical theory combines a Socratic conclusion about the sufficiency of virtue for happiness with an Aristotelian conclusion about the scope of the objectives at which an agent may rationally aim. Irwin's arguments for this interpretation brilliantly illustrate a range of considerations the Stoics might have deployed if they wished to defend this combination of views on the basis of 'premisses that [Aristotle] accepts' ('Conceptions', 209); cf. Irwin, 'Virtue, Praise, and Success: Stoic Responses to Aristotle', *The Monist*, 73 (1990), 59–79. The question I am interested in here is whether the Stoics did defend this combination of views. There is ample textual evidence for (1), but it is hard to find clear evidence that shows the Stoics accept (2). If (2) is not a Stoic view, Irwin's arguments remain powerful criticisms of Aristotle, developed from Aristotelian premisses, but they are not Stoic.

gests, that the *rational supremacy* of virtue in relation to pleasure and health cannot be ensured if pleasure and health are counted as parts of the human *telos*.<sup>46</sup> A mixed account of the end, of the sort Aristotle is sometimes thought to hold, acknowledges the possibility of conflict between virtue and other goods such as health and wealth, since these are proper parts of happiness along with virtue.<sup>47</sup> In so far as it is rational to pursue what is required for happiness, an agent will have some reason to be virtuous and some reason to pursue external goods, and the latter sort of reason will not depend on the former.<sup>48</sup> If an opportunity to acquire external goods in a manner contrary to virtue arises, these reasons may come into conflict, presenting a rational threat to virtue.

The prospect of conflict between virtue and external goods need not undermine a rational defence of virtue provided it can be shown that the reasons virtue provides will always outweigh the reasons provided by external goods. Thus a eudaimonist view that eliminates conflict among competing rational ends might appear to require only the claim that virtue is always the source of dominant or overriding considerations, trumping the countervailing worth of all other components of happiness. But as Irwin points out, the older Stoics do not seem to have regarded this alternative as a stable position.<sup>49</sup> The Stoic identification of virtue and happiness seems to rest, at least in part, on the assumption that if objectives other than virtue are counted as ends of action in their own right, an immoralist can always construct plausible cases in which these objectives are to be pursued *contrary* to virtue.<sup>50</sup> One basic motivation for the indifferents doctrine, therefore, is the supposition that virtue is always the most rational course of action, together with the

<sup>46</sup> See esp. Irwin, 'Conceptions', 234–42. Cf. Plut. *Stoic repugn.* 1038D–1041B; *Comm. not.* 1070D; Cic. *Fin.* 3. 11; 4. 40; 4. 54; 5. 22; *Off.* 3. 18; 3. 20; 3. 35; *Acad.* 2. 140 (*SVF* iii. 21); Sen. *De vita beata* 14. 1–2; 15. 1–7; Epict. *Diss.* 4. 5. 31–2.

<sup>47</sup> Cicero assumes this reading of Aristotle at *Fin.* 2. 19: 'Moreover, many and great philosophers have made these ultimate goods a composite, as Aristotle conjoined the exercise of virtue with prosperity in a complete life' (my translation). Cf. Arist. *Rhet.* 1. 5.

<sup>48</sup> Though this might not be the case on e.g. the account defended by John Cooper in 'Aristotle and the Goods of Fortune', *Philosophical Review*, 94 (1985), 173–96.

<sup>49</sup> 'The Stoics believe that Aristotle cannot consistently maintain both that happiness is a mixture and that virtue is its dominant component' ('Conceptions', 213).

<sup>50</sup> As Irwin observes: 'A Stoic critic might argue that once we allow external advantages to count against virtue, we cannot plausibly maintain that they never dominate over virtue' ('Conceptions', 216).

assumption that this result cannot be secured if promoted indifferents are constituents of the human *telos*.<sup>51</sup>

Yet if this motivation explains, or partly explains, the exclusion of indifferents from the *telos* in older Stoic theory, it is hardly compelling for the Stoics to concede, in addition, that an agent has independent reasons, founded on a distinct kind of intrinsic value, to pursue indifferents—unless they have further arguments to show that rational objectives of *this sort* cannot conflict with the pursuit of virtue. If the Stoic account of the human *telos* differs from a mixed conception only by restricting happiness to a subset of the objectives at which it is rational to aim, then although this account may eliminate the possibility of conflict among the ends included *within* happiness, it does not eliminate the rational threat to virtue. It merely extends the scope of rational action beyond the scope of happiness, inviting the prospect of conflict between eudaimonist reasons and non-eudaimonist ones.<sup>52</sup> If that is the Stoics' position, then regardless of their claim that happiness consists in virtue alone, the structure of practical reason as they conceive it is substantively identical to that assumed by a mixed account of the end. On this account, though the Stoics restrict the scope of happiness to virtue, they nonetheless adopt a mixed account of *practical reason*, as we might put it, a mixed account of the scope of those final objectives at which an agent may rationally aim and which supply the considerations that motivate and justify rational action.

<sup>51</sup> Plutarch also says that Chrysippus acknowledged that justice could be preserved if pleasure is counted as a good, provided it is not counted as a component of the *telos* (*Stoic repugn.* 1040 c–d). What Chrysippus means, presumably, is that justice could be preserved if externals had goodness only derivatively or extrinsically in relation to the *telos* of virtue. For Plutarch elsewhere adds the following gloss: 'Moreover, there is no one who does not recognize that, if one of two goods is the goal and the other subserves the goal [τοῦ μὲν τέλους τοῦ δὲ πρὸς τὸ τέλος], the goal is a greater and more perfect good. Even Chrysippus recognizes the difference, as is clear in the third book concerning Goods' (*Comm. not.* 1070 d, trans. Cherniss). That indifferents are derivative goods in this way is ultimately not the Stoic position, but Chrysippus is surely right to note that extrinsic goods of this sort would not present a threat to virtue. This acknowledgement does not support the intrinsic-value reading.

<sup>52</sup> Admittedly, an account restricting happiness to a subset of final rational objectives might be understood as a kind of conceptual reinforcement of the rational dominance of virtue: it would allow us to range the considerations having to do with virtue and happiness, on the one hand, against those having to do with external resources that do not matter for happiness, on the other. But it does not hold out any clear advantage over a mixed account of the human *telos*. It does not eliminate the prospect of rational conflict between virtue and other objectives but merely relocates it by redrawing the boundaries of happiness.

The main question for the intrinsic-value reading, it thus appears, is why Chrysippus should have thought that the rational threat to virtue could be defused simply by regarding indifferents as rational objectives whose value does not depend on their contribution to happiness. If the Stoics are prepared to concede that indifferents have rational weight independently of their contribution to the human good, as Irwin's account maintains, the mere exclusion of indifferents from an account of the good does not seem sufficient to show that it is never rational to acquire health and wealth by vicious means. Instead, it shows only that not everything we have reason to pursue contributes constitutively or instrumentally to the human *telos*. Of course, the Stoics might simply insist that the goodness of virtue cannot be outweighed by the value of other rational objectives, putting their thumb on the axiological scale, in Brad Inwood's apt expression.<sup>53</sup> But there is no need to attribute this sort of brute stipulation to the older Stoics, and such an account fits poorly with other features of our evidence, as I will show. To secure the claim that virtue is always the most rational course of action, the Stoics need to argue, in a principled way, that the value of indifferents can never outweigh the rational imperative to preserve one's own virtue.

How might the Stoics defend this claim compatibly with the view that promoted indifferents instantiate a form of intrinsic value? One way of doing so would be to preserve a connection between promoted indifferents and intrinsic value but suppose that the promoted status of indifferents is itself conditional, so that token instances of promoted objects lose their promoted valence, so to speak, in cases in which pursuing them conflicts with virtue. Then the right way to describe the case of the sage who sacrifices her health would be to say not that she is giving up some valuable objective—a token instance of a promoted type—but that her health is either not promoted or is no longer promoted. On this view the *promoted status* of token indifferents would be conditioned by circumstances in a way that tracks the requirements of virtue, so that selections underpinned by the value of indifferents would uniformly coincide with virtuous motivation. On this account, the

<sup>53</sup> Inwood applies this image to characterize the position of Critolaus, which combines the claim that externals are genuine goods with the claim that goods of this sort can never outweigh the goods of the soul. See Inwood, *Ethics after Aristotle* (Cambridge, Mass., 2014), 61–70.

motivations generated by a rational concern for virtue and by a rational concern for indifferents would overlap and reinforce one another, with no possibility of conflict between them.

There are at least two problems with this account as an interpretation of the Stoic position, however. The first is simply that it does not fit the way in which Stoic texts characterize indifferents. There are, to be sure, circumstantial or conditional *duties* (*kathēkonta*)—self-mutilation or the sacrifice of property being instances—and in such cases the Stoics think it is rational and obligatory to sacrifice a token promoted indifferent (D.L. 7. 109, 121). But as Stephen White observes, there appears to be no ‘corresponding variability’ in the promoted and dispromoted status of indifferents themselves.<sup>54</sup> Health is a type of promoted thing, and a token instance of it, such as my own health, evidently retains its promoted status even in cases in which virtue requires me to give it up. Second, and more importantly, it seems clear that the promoted and dispromoted status of indifferents *must* be fixed independently of any reference to virtue if indifferents are to play the deliberative role the Stoics assign to them. Judgements about what is *kathēkon* are justified, at least in part, by reference to what is promoted and dispromoted. The sage who commits suicide, for instance, does so with a view to the preponderance of indifferents available to her (Cic. *Fin.* 3. 60; cf. Stob. *Ecl.* 2. 86). It is by looking to their status that she arrives at knowledge of what virtue requires. It is difficult to see how indifferents can play this role unless their status as promoted or dispromoted is fixed without reference to the appropriate course of action in a given case.

Alternatively, the Stoics might suppose that the promoted and dispromoted status of indifferents is fixed, but that token instances of what is promoted or dispromoted have rational force only in

<sup>54</sup> See White, ‘Stoic Selection: Objects, Actions, and Agents’, in A. Nightingale and D. Sedley (eds.), *Ancient Models of Mind* (Cambridge, 2010), 110–29 at 112 n. 3: ‘Value is primarily an attribute of types, and in some situations, tokens of a preferred type (healthy meals), while still “worth getting” (ἀγαθή), are not “to be gotten” (ἀγατέα), and conversely for dispreferreds; accordingly, our sources report token-variability in duties “according to circumstance”, but no corresponding variability in value by circumstance, no circumstantial preferreds or dispreferreds.’ The point had already been made by Tad Brennan (‘Reasonable Impressions in Stoicism’ [‘Reasonable’], *Phronesis*, 41 (1996), 318–34 at 332–3). That the valence of indifferents varies contextually appears to have been the view of Ariston (*SVF* i. 361 = LS 58F). Chrysippus’ response seems to be recorded by Plutarch at *Comm. not.* 1069 E (*SVF* iii. 491). Cf. Cic. *Fin.* 4. 70–1.

cases in which there is no conflict with virtue. On this account, the promoted status of a token indifferent such as my own health remains constant, but the reasons associated with its *selective value* may vary with circumstance. A number of commentators appear to suggest a view along these lines.<sup>55</sup> Thus Julia Annas speaks of the reasons grounded in the goodness of virtue as ‘overriding’ or ‘silencing’ reasons grounded in concern for the value of indifferents.<sup>56</sup> Irwin seems to attribute selective value to just those indifferents that virtue requires one to select anyway, so that the value of indifferents can never constitute some remainder that counts against virtuous action.<sup>57</sup> Tad Brennan speaks of a form of ‘planning-value’ that is strictly limited to ‘future-tensed’ considerations but ‘disappears when the future becomes the present’.<sup>58</sup> John Cooper argues that Stoic agents will ‘take any and every future opportunity’ to secure indifferents but will ‘not regret it if their own efforts fail to

<sup>55</sup> Including Long and Sedley, who characterize the value of indifferents as ‘conditional upon circumstances’ (LS, 358) and also speak of ‘intrinsic differences of value’ among indifferents (ibid. 359), as I noted above.

<sup>56</sup> *Morality*, 121 and 170–2, esp. 171.

<sup>57</sup> Irwin’s view is sophisticated and complex. Here is the crucial passage in a recent statement of it: ‘We can now understand why the Stoics claim that virtue alone has the same selective value as virtue plus indifferents. For the purposes of selection the two states of affairs are equivalent; for in selecting the fully virtuous action we necessarily select the appropriate preferred indifferents, and hence we could never select virtuous action that does not aim at preferred indifferents. Hence, from the forward-looking point of view of the agent selecting, any selection of virtuous action is necessarily a selection of appropriate preferred indifferents, and so includes the selective value of this latter selection’ (DOE, 333). *Pace* Irwin, I do not think the Stoics attribute selective value to virtue or make virtuous action the object of selection (*ἐκλογή*). More to the point, what does Irwin say about promoted indifferents that are not included in a rational selection? If our ship is sinking and an appropriate selection requires me to give the life-preserver to you, how do the Stoics characterize *my* health, a promoted indifferent that reason now requires me to relinquish? Irwin’s account seems to suggest that my health does not have selective value in this context, since otherwise the virtuous action (giving up the life-preserver) will not have the same selective value as virtue plus indifferents, i.e. as virtue *plus* the life-preserver. As I understand it, Irwin’s view thus requires that the selective value of various indifferents *tracks*, so to speak, the requirements of virtue, appearing and disappearing as virtue requires, so that selections underpinned by the value of indifferents uniformly coincide with virtuous motivation and action. But this seems to be the same having and eating of cake that slips into other accounts. One cannot consistently maintain both that promoted indifferents have their value without reference to virtue and that selective value attaches only to those indifferents it is virtuous to select.

<sup>58</sup> See Brennan, ‘Stoic Moral Psychology’ [‘Psychology’], in B. Inwood (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics* (Cambridge, 2003), 257–94 at 271; Brennan, *The Stoic Life*, 101.

produce the valued outcome they were aiming for'.<sup>59</sup> Katja Vogt speaks, in a similar vein, of 'taking the same things seriously and not seriously'.<sup>60</sup>

Such characterizations are evidently intended to explain, compatibly with the assumption that health and wealth are always promoted, why the selective value of these objectives cannot be weighed against the value of virtue—how it is, that is to say, that reason uniformly recommends the virtuous course of action on the Stoic account. Some of them secure this result by ascribing mysterious properties to selective value: it vanishes in certain contexts or coincides, fortuitously, with just the course of action that virtue happens to require. Others secure it by requiring a kind of rational ambivalence of the agent herself: she must take different prospective and retrospective attitudes towards indifferents or be of two minds about them at once. But all of these accounts suppose there to be, at the very core of Stoic theory, two independent realms or orders of value, each capable of justifying action and motivation in its own right, but whose relation to each other remains highly mysterious. Indifferents are to be taken seriously for their own sake, but in cases of conflict with virtue, their rational weight simply disappears.

These accounts are perhaps coherent, but they rely after all on the sort of stipulation a charitable interpreter might wish to avoid, and it is worth noting that they abandon any recognizable account of intrinsic value in their effort to make sense of the Stoic position. The value that figures in contemporary value theory as a basis for (or a result of, on some accounts) reasons for action is not the sort of thing whose normative weight or ontological status depends on its temporal relation to the agent. Value supervenes, in one way or another, on objective features of the world, showing our attachment to those features to be rational and appropriate in prospect and retrospect alike. Though the value of external objectives might be made to depend on the prospect of obtaining the valuable outcome compatibly with virtue—as some broadly Kantian accounts of value and reasons propose—it is not clear that conditional value of this sort may properly be regarded as intrinsic.<sup>61</sup> In any case, it is

<sup>59</sup> *Pursuits*, 189–90.

<sup>60</sup> See Vogt, 'Taking the Same Things Seriously and Not Seriously: A Stoic Proposal on Value and the Good', in D. R. Gordon and D. B. Suits (eds.), *Epicurus: His Continuing Influence and Contemporary Relevance* (Philosophy Series, 4; Rochester, 2014), 55–76.

<sup>61</sup> There are accounts of conditional intrinsic value in the literature, but they re-

hardly a satisfactory response to a hedonist or committed immoralist to stipulate that the value of health or pleasure appears and disappears as the exigencies of virtue happen to require. If we ascribe independent value to health, as the intrinsic-value reading requires, it is implausible to suppose that worth of this sort vanishes in cases of conflict with other practical objectives. If health is an intrinsically valuable objective, then the virtuous agent who sacrifices her health for the sake of her child or city may act reasonably on the whole, but she will nonetheless act contrary to some independent *pro tanto* reason she has for preserving her health, and this reason will need to be considered and weighed against the considerations that favour virtue.<sup>62</sup>

The upshot is that, if we accept a connection between intrinsic value and practical reasons, it is hard to see how ascriptions of intrinsic value to indifferents can be squared with the basic motivations that underwrite the Stoic account. Though an appeal to the principles of reasonable selection might ensure that an agent always has *most* reason to distribute indifferents in the way that virtue and conformity to nature require, it could hardly ensure that an agent has *no* reason to distribute them otherwise. This point tends to get lost in discussions of the indifferents doctrine, but it is absolutely central to the Stoic position, for it is precisely the point that substantively distinguishes Stoic ethical theory from its Academic and Peripatetic rivals. If the Stoics suppose that promoted indifferents instantiate a form of intrinsic value capable of grounding and justifying action while also insisting that value of this sort cannot underwrite axiological conflicts (whether between virtue and indifferents or among indifferents themselves), this amounts to a tremendous *ad hoc* stipulation at the bare core of Stoic theory.<sup>63</sup> On this construal

main controversial. In any case, the Stoics would need to establish the stronger thesis that the intrinsic value of promoted indifferents is conditional *on virtue* in particular.

<sup>62</sup> This point does not depend on modern conceptual distinctions or on the language of reasons and rational justification. The tragic view articulated with power and insight in Greek drama rests on the assumption that the world is not the sort of place where every objective worth pursuing can be reconciled in a single unified whole. The possibility of conflict among such objectives clearly underpins this outlook. If the older Stoics dismissed this possibility by mere stipulation, it is not hard to see why they attracted the criticism of the Academy. As I will show, they do not rely on mere stipulation, but on a systematic account of the scope and nature of goodness as a form of rational order.

<sup>63</sup> Ian Kidd characterizes the indifferents doctrine in this way as the 'bare core' of Stoic theory. See 'Intermediates', 150.

of Stoicism, the possibility of conflict among rational ends is eliminated by fiat rather than argument.<sup>64</sup>

A fuller defence of these negative claims would require a fuller consideration of the details of Stoic deliberation and of the motivations behind the indifferents doctrine, but the concerns I have raised suggest that if indifferents are treated as practical objectives whose rational weight is grounded in their intrinsic value, the Stoics cannot rule out the prospect of rational conflict in the way Chrysippus intended without resorting to *ad hoc* stipulation. The Stoics' commitment to rational eudaimonism ensures that there is ultimate reason to pursue only what contributes to an agent's own happiness, and it is clear that indifferents do not do this in any straightforward way. The Stoics' exclusion of external resources from the human *telos* cannot be regarded as a mere terminological or taxonomical point. It is most plausibly understood as restricting the scope of rational action to virtue and hence as a denial of intrinsic value to all but virtue.

#### 6. A positive account

If the argument so far is correct, the value of promoted indifferents is neither instrumental nor final. The former alternative is excluded by clear textual evidence to the contrary. The latter is ruled out by the Stoic commitment to rational eudaimonism in conjunction with the claim that *eudaimonia* depends on virtue alone. As I have emphasized, the difficulty of explaining the role of indifferents on either of these models is rooted in two especially puzzling features of the Stoic account. On the one hand, Stoic texts make it clear that there is a close connection between appropriate action and the value of indifferents. That *kathēkonta* are in some way specified

<sup>64</sup> One additional text might seem to support the intrinsic-value reading and should be addressed. Commentators sometimes emphasize a passage, quoted by Plutarch, in which Chrysippus allows that promoted indifferents may be called goods (*Comm. not.* 1048). I follow A. A. Long in supposing that 'this is only a use of popular terminology', not a substantive philological concession ('The Stoic Concept of Evil', *Philosophical Quarterly*, 18 (1968), 329–43 at 333 n. 18). Presumably, the point of the remark is not to minimize the difference between goods and indifferents, as commentators sometime imply, but to emphasize that terminology is not of paramount importance as long as a substantive difference is understood. Cicero's Cato similarly insists on a substantive distinction between Stoic and Academic accounts of goodness (*Fin.* 3. 10) but goes on to concede that 'if the meaning [of the indifferents doctrine] is understood, we should be relaxed about the words we use' (*Fin.* 3. 52, trans. Woolf).

by an agent's relation to promoted and dispromoted indifferents is clearly a piece of orthodox, Chrysippean Stoicism. At the same time, Stoic sources insist that the selective value of indifferents is flatly incommensurable with the goodness of virtue. That the value of indifferents cannot be weighed *against* the value of virtue is clear from the fact that the Stoics think it is irrational to regret their loss. That their value cannot be *added* to the value of virtue is clear from the fact that the Stoics deny that virtue together with indifferents adds up to a more desirable outcome than virtue alone.

An interpretation that makes sense of these Stoic claims should therefore satisfy two desiderata. First, it should explain how it is that although the promoted and dispromoted status of indifferents can guide the deliberations of rational agents, indifferents are not themselves an independent source of normative, practical reasons—i.e. of reasons for action. For this is just the result the Stoic identification of happiness with virtue is supposed to exclude. Second, an adequate account should avoid the claim that promoted indifferents are those that in some way contribute to virtue and happiness while dispromoted indifferents are those that obstruct it. An interpretation along these lines conflicts with the best available textual evidence. These requirements may seem incompatible, and as long as the value of indifferents is understood in final or instrumental terms I suspect that they are. The choice between final and instrumental value does not exhaust the interpretative possibilities, however. An object or circumstance that is itself neither a practical end nor an instrumental means to such an end may guide rational action in another way: namely, by providing grounds for belief about some further objective whose value constitutes the action's justificatory basis. This position is subtle, but it is not incoherent, and it is strongly suggested by a passage in which Epictetus reports Chrysippus' view of the role of indifferents in rational deliberation (*Diss.* 2. 6. 9).<sup>65</sup> In this and similar texts, selective value does not seem to figure as a source of practical justification in its own right, but as a source of considerations that *guide* a rational agent in relation to a distinct justificatory end, thereby playing a role in her pursuits and plans.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>65</sup> A closely parallel passage at *Diss.* 2. 10. 5–6 confirms that Chrysippus is characterizing the ideally rational case, the case of the 'good and excellent man' (ὁ καλὸς καὶ ἀγαθός).

<sup>66</sup> Such a view is perhaps implicit in the characterizations of selective value offered

This epistemic role can be usefully illustrated by comparison to a later view. In his *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy*, William Paley cites conformity to the will of God as the basic ground of moral obligation, and he has been regarded as a divine-command theorist for this reason. But Paley has also been classified, along with Bentham and Mill, as one of the leading exponents of British utilitarianism. How can both classifications be accurate? The answer consists in the distinction Paley draws between conformity to the divine will and our grounds for knowing what that will requires. Paley holds, in particular, ‘that the method of coming at the will of God, concerning any action, by the light of nature, is to inquire into the tendency of that action to promote or diminish the general happiness’.<sup>67</sup> As Michael Depaul observes, Paley is evidently committed to the view that there are ‘two properties that are coextensive with moral obligation: being felicitic and being commanded by God’.<sup>68</sup> This coextension shows, in turn, that Paley can consistently accept the following claims: (1) that right actions are actions that promote felicity; (2) that a rational agent will consult this outcome in order to determine the action she ought to perform; (3) that actions are not right *because* they promote felicity, but because they conform to divine will.

The details of Stoic deliberation are considerably more complex than those of Paley’s picture, but Paley’s view usefully demonstrates the basic coherence of an account that distinguishes the justificatory grounds of right action from the basis of justified belief that an action is right.<sup>69</sup> Paley treats the property of promoting felicity

by John Cooper and Tad Brennan: ‘pursuit’ and ‘planning’ value, respectively. Cf. n. 8 above.

<sup>67</sup> Paley, quoted in M. DePaul, ‘Supervenience and Moral Dependence’ [‘Supervenience’], *Philosophical Studies*, 51 (1987), 425–39 at 436.

<sup>68</sup> ‘Supervenience’, 436. See further Paley, *The Works of William Paley, D.D., with Additional Sermons . . .*, 7 vols. [*Works*] (London, 1825), iv. 38–9: ‘it necessarily comes to pass, that what promotes the public happiness, or happiness on the whole, is agreeable to the fitness of things, to nature, to reason, and to truth: and such (as will appear by and by) is the Divine character, that what promotes the general happiness, is required by the will of God.’

<sup>69</sup> This point of resemblance to Stoic theory seems unlikely to be accidental. Some of Paley’s claims in *Natural Theology* have close analogues in Cicero’s *De natura deorum*. Paley won the Bachelor’s Prize in Latin at Cambridge for an essay comparing Stoic and Epicurean accounts of morality (though he sided there with the Epicureans). According to his son’s biography, ‘Horace, Virgil, and Cicero were even to the latest of his life his table books, and at a time when he could have no other occasion for them than as books of amusement’ (*Works*, i. 60). On Paley’s knowledge of and

city as an indication that an action conforms to divine will and hence is commanded by God. The Stoics appear to regard the property of promoting health or wealth as a defeasible indication that a token action conforms to the patterns of nature and hence is *kathēkon* to perform.<sup>70</sup> For both Paley and the Stoics, then, an action's outcome constitutes an essential consideration to which a rational agent will respond, one that figures systematically in her deliberations because of the limitations inherent in her epistemic position. This outcome is not itself a reason to perform the action, however, but a reason to believe the action satisfies a requirement that is based on some further objective. Like the property of felicity as conceived by Paley, promoted and dispromoted indifferents appear to ground reasons for belief about the content of our obligations, though the obligations themselves are justified on other grounds.

One might object that a view of this sort rests on a distinction without a difference. If right action requires the pursuit or maximization of a given state of affairs, what difference can it make whether we treat that outcome as an end in its own right? The answer is that it makes a great deal of difference to our axiological and motivational account. Setting aside Stoic views for a moment, consider the case of a parent who, in taking her child's temperature, sees that the thermometer's mercury indicates a dangerous fever. Clearly the mercury level is itself an indifferent state of affairs, but it may nonetheless indicate that taking the child to the hospital is a reasonable and appropriate thing to do, and the parent may well offer this state of affairs—that the mercury level in the thermometer was high—as the *reason* why she did so. If we wished to analyse the parent's motives and axiological beliefs, however, we clearly would not say that she ascribes independent value to a certain kind of thermometer reading—as if her aim in driving to the hospital was to get the mercury to go down. We would rather say that the mercury level constitutes a highly relevant epistemic consideration, a crucial indication of the health of her child, which is something she does value and aims to preserve at all costs. The mercury level plays a crucial role in indicating the appropriate course of action and in showing it to be rational. But it is the sickness of her child, not facts

use of classical sources see further M. D. Eddy, 'The Rhetoric and Science of Paley's *Natural Theology*', *Theology and Literature*, 18 (2004), 1–22.

<sup>70</sup> Dispromoted indifferents are of course equally informative as defeasible indications that a token action is contrary to nature's purpose.

about thermometers, which constitutes the normative basis of the parent's action.

This example is of course simplistic in comparison with the Stoic view, but it shows that there is room for an analysis of rational motivation that differs substantively from the accounts I have considered and which fits the features of Stoic theory very well. In particular, it shows how facts about indifferent objects or states of affairs can guide and structure an agent's motivations without constituting their justificatory ground. It explains, that is to say, how indifferents can satisfy two conditions that Cicero, speaking for the Academy, alleges to be incompatible: indifferents 'have no effect on the happy life' but nonetheless 'affect our desire' (*Fin.* 4. 47, trans. Woolf).

It does not follow from this account that the Stoics must deny all value to what is external.<sup>71</sup> It is consistent to deny that value belongs to indifferents, understood as discrete parts of a larger whole, while nonetheless ascribing value to the whole itself.<sup>72</sup> On the Stoic account, goodness attaches to rational order as instantiated in knowledge and in the patterns of activity that express it. Though it is not the sort of thing that can belong to the discrete objectives that guide an agent's actions, goodness can nonetheless belong to internal features of rational action and to the rational patterns expressed in Zeus' own creative agency. Such an axiological account is of course a consequence of the Stoics' cosmic teleology, of their view that human rationality is a homologous part of a wider rational order that is itself the final ground of value.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>71</sup> I thank Brad Inwood for prompting me to clarify this point and for some of the terminology in which I express it here.

<sup>72</sup> There is nothing formally incoherent or intrinsically implausible about such an account. Strength, stability, and beauty may supervene on an arch, and we build arches with a view to realizing these features. It does not follow that these features belong to the individual stones it comprises. For this Stoic metaphor see D.L. 7. 90 and Sen. *Ep.* 118. I am grateful to Tad Brennan for drawing my attention to the relevance of this example.

<sup>73</sup> In fact I do not see how a view that drains all intrinsic value from the objective order of the cosmos could ever get off the ground. Such a conception would presumably leave rational agents, including Zeus, with no reason to act one way rather than another. That is not the view I am proposing here. The Stoic examples of acting and dancing (*Fin.* 3. 24) suggest that rational activity—activity guided by perfected reason—may itself be a locus of value on the Stoic view, since it flows from and participates in virtue. Whether or not the Stoics ascribe goodness or value of some form to the cosmos (as distinct from Zeus' creative *activity*) is a further question about which I am uncertain. Such a view may seem to be suggested by Cicero's account in *De natura deorum*, where the cosmos is said to manifest every kind of excellence and

A position along these lines is especially borne out by evidence for the Stoic view not tainted by association with the later Academic tradition and with Carneades in particular. Consider, first, what can be known about the practical deliberations of the Stoic agent and of the epistemic position of the sage as conceived by the older Stoics. According to the account Diogenes associates with Chrysippus' treatise *On Ends*, the human *telos* is to live following nature, where this means engaging 'in no activity customarily [*εἴωθεν*] forbidden by the universal law, which is the right reason pervading everything [*ὁ ὀρθὸς λόγος διὰ πάντων ἐρχόμενος*]' (D.L. 7. 87, trans. Long and Sedley).<sup>74</sup> This aim is realized when everything is done 'on the basis of the concordance [*συμφωνίαν*] of each man's *daimōn* with the will [*boulēsis*] of the administrator of the whole' (D.L. 7. 88, trans. Long and Sedley).<sup>75</sup> To adhere to *orthos logos* as expressed in nature is the regulative aim of practical rationality, and this aim is realized by conforming one's own assents and impulses as far as possible to the rational purpose of Zeus—indeed, to the assents and impulses of Zeus.<sup>76</sup>

Now, there is one clear sense in which every part of the cosmos cannot fail to conform to Zeus' *boulēsis*. The Stoics hold that events within the physical cosmos are fixed by an interlocking chain of physical causes, and they regard the entirety of this causal order as itself conforming to divine law. In speaking of a rational capacity to conform to nature, then, the Stoics do not intend any contrast that implies an ability to act outside this causal framework. What distinguishes a virtuous and happy participation in the cosmic order

beauty (*ND* 2. 57–8, and cf. *SVF* ii. 1027=LS 46A), but this conclusion has been questioned by Tad Brennan ('Psychology', 287–8 n. 63) and more recently by John Wynne ('God's Indifferents: Why Cicero's Stoic Jupiter Made the World', *Apeiron*, 45 (2012), 354–83).

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Sen. *Ep.* 66. 39: 'Quod est summum hominis bonum? Ex naturae voluntate se gerere.'

<sup>75</sup> For further comment on this passage see Rist, *Stoic Philosophy*, 262 ff., and G. Betegh, 'Cosmological Ethics in the *Timaeus* and Early Stoicism', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 24 (2003), 273–302 at 286 ff. *Contra* Rist, Betegh argues that *δαίμων* in this passage should be understood to refer to the agent's *hēgemonikon*. I agree with Betegh on this point.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Inwood, *Ethics*, 119: 'It is [a rational agent's] duty to adapt himself to this cosmos, to want events to occur as they in fact will. Ideally, a man should never be in the position of wanting something different from the actual course of events, since what happens in the world is the will of Zeus, is the best possible way for things to occur, and since man as a rational agent should assimilate his will to that of the supremely rational agent, who is Zeus.'

from a vicious and miserable one is rather the condition one's *hēgemonikon* is in as Zeus' plan unfolds. Every part of the cosmos will do as *orthos logos* ordains, but the parts possessed of reason may do so in one of two ways: either by preserving or by failing to preserve a cognitive condition that itself accords with Zeus' rational plans. Whether human agents preserve a *virtuous* conformity to nature as they go through the motions of fate depends on the way in which their rational faculty is disposed.

To conform to nature in the sense required for virtue, then, is to ensure that one's *hēgemonikon* preserves a harmony with Zeus' own purpose. It is clear that for the older Stoics such harmony is a wholly cognitive matter. Virtue depends on an epistemic grasp of the teleological structure of nature and of the norms that govern human social relations in particular (Stob. *Ecl.* 2. 58–62). This point needs to be reconciled, however, with the fact that even a sage who achieves this formidable cognitive condition is not omniscient. She does not know the future course of events nor, presumably, a whole host of truths about past and present. Her assents are isomorphic to those of Zeus as far as they go, but they are not comprehensive. The epistemic ideal exemplified by the sage rather amounts to what Michael Frede has characterized as 'perfect rationality under partial ignorance'.<sup>77</sup> It consists in the absence of false belief and in the stability of a circumscribed body of knowledge. It is exquisitely demanding, to be sure, but it falls far short of omniscience.<sup>78</sup>

The formulations of the *telos* associated with Chrysippus appear to recognize this point, allowing for the limited reach of the sage's cognition. Thus the Chrysippean formula preserved by Diogenes does not identify the end with avoiding what is forbidden by *orthos logos simpliciter* but with avoiding what is customarily (*εἰωθεῖν*) forbidden by it.<sup>79</sup> Similarly, Stobaeus' source tells us that, wanting to lend precision to the formulae of Zeno and Cleanthes, Chrysippus made the end consist not in conformity to nature *simpliciter* but in living according to one's experience of what happens by nature (*κατ' ἐμπειρίαν τῶν φύσει συμβαινόντων*: Stob. *Ecl.* 2. 76). A simi-

<sup>77</sup> M. Frede, 'Introduction', in M. Frede and G. Striker (eds.), *Rationality in Greek Thought* (Oxford, 1996), 1–28 at 16–17.

<sup>78</sup> e.g. Sen. *Ep.* 109. 5: 'non enim omnia sapiens scit'. Cf. also *Ep.* 119. 12; G. Striker, 'Critical Notice of Brad Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*' ['Critical Notice'], *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 19 (1989), 91–100 at 98; G. Kerferd, 'What Does the Wise Man Know?', in J. Rist (ed.), *The Stoics* (Berkeley, 1978), 125–36.

<sup>79</sup> I owe this observation to Ian Hensley.

lar epistemic qualification figures in Cicero's summary statement of the Stoic *telos*: 'to live applying one's knowledge of the natural order' ('vivere scientiam adhibentem earum rerum quae natura eveniant').<sup>80</sup> These formulae are shaped by the ideal of *homoiōsis theōi*—conformity to the divine mind—but also by the recognition that this ideal is only partially attainable by human beings.<sup>81</sup>

These considerations point up an important feature of older Stoic theory: the logic of the Stoic position is such that the notion of *kathēkon* action cannot answer to action undertaken from a god's-eye view or all-things-considered perspective. Since the sage performs all of the *kathēkonta*, as Chrysippus says, it must answer instead to action that is reasonable in the light of what the sage can know of nature's rational purpose. It must be possible, on the Stoic account, for a limited body of knowledge to underwrite infallibly appropriate action. If that is so, then the determination of *kathēkonta* cannot be a straightforward function of nature's norms as applied to the situation of a rational agent. It must rather be a function of a finite agent's epistemic reasons in relation to these norms. The action-guiding assents of the sage must be rational not in relation to nature or to the principles of *orthos logos* all things considered (since even the sage is not in a position to consider all things), but in relation to what she is in a position to know about them.

What this means in practice, it appears, is that even a sage must rely on probabilistic judgements in her deliberations. The virtuous activity of the sage will depend on an assessment of the course of action that best conforms to nature in the light of what she knows, on the application of her perfected rationality to what evidence she has. And if the action-guiding assents of the sage are both probabilistic in this way and infallibly *true*, as the Stoics maintain, it cannot be that the sage who assents to a hormetic impression—to an impression that an envisioned action is *kathēkon*—thereby accepts that this action accords with nature or Zeus' purpose in an all-things-considered sense. It must rather be that she commits herself only

<sup>80</sup> As Tad Brennan observes, the qualification embedded in the Chrysippean formulae is plausibly understood as a softening of the ideal—impossible for a finite epistemic agent—of complete conformity to Zeus' βούλησις. See Brennan, 'The *Kathēkon*: A Report on Some Recent Work at Cornell' [*'Kathēkon'*], in A. Laks and M. Narcy (eds.), *Le Devoir: origines stoïciennes, postérité, réévaluations* (Philosophie antique, 14; Villeneuve d'Ascq, 2014), 41–70 at 60 n. 43.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Inwood, *Ethics*, 119; Cooper, *Pursuits*, 166–83.

to the view that this is the course of action *there is most reason to believe* accords with nature. And if *A* is indeed the prospective action the sage has most reason to believe accords with nature, then whether or not *A* accords with nature in an all-things-considered sense, *A* will be the appropriate action to perform.<sup>82</sup>

This suggests a deliberative role for indifferents that is importantly distinct from the view that they are practical objectives in their own right. The Stoic classification of indifferents, it appears, codifies the states and conditions that rational nature prescribes for human agents not absolutely, but usually or on the whole. It therefore constitutes at least part of the grounds on which a rational Stoic agent will base her assent to hormetic impressions. On this account, to say that a particular outcome is promoted is not to say that an agent has a normative reason to select it. It is rather to say that she has a defeasible reason to *believe* that selecting it is what conformity to nature requires. On this interpretation, the action that is *kathēkon* in a given case will not be fixed by the preponderance of practical reasons supplied by distinct practical objectives but by the balance of available evidence: by whether it is the action an ideally rational agent has most reason to believe conforms to nature from her limited epistemic vantage-point. An epistemic justification of this sort appears to be the basic sense of *eulogos apologia*: the reasonable or probable justification that figures in the Stoic account of *kathēkonta*.<sup>83</sup> Such a view is consistent with, and in some cases suggested by, the few texts that preserve an account of practical deliberation that is securely free of Academic influence.<sup>84</sup> Consider, in particular, two often-cited passages from Epictetus, which appear to characterize rational deliberation as Chrysippus himself understands it:

<sup>82</sup> The appropriate course of action will often, perhaps almost always, be a course of action that, in the light of considerations known only to Zeus, would not be reasonable at all. But if it is reasonable in relation to the knowledge the sage has, it is appropriate and hence virtuous for her to perform.

<sup>83</sup> For the Stoic account of reasonable propositions see D.L. 7. 76. For discussion see G. Striker, 'Sceptical Strategies' ['Sceptical'], in J. Barnes, M. Burnyeat, and M. Schofield (eds.), *Doubt and Dogmatism: Studies in Hellenistic Epistemology* (Oxford, 1980), 54–83; Brennan, 'Reasonable'.

<sup>84</sup> It also fits with the Stoic doctrine of reservation (*ὑπεξαιρέσις*): roughly, the view that the future-oriented judgements of the sage must be qualified in view of her limited knowledge of Zeus' purposes. See esp. Sen. *Ben.* 4. 34; Stob. *Ecl.* 2. 115 (LS 65W); Marc. Aur. *Med.* 4. 1; Epict. *Ench.* 2. 2; Sen. *Tranq.* 13. 2–14. 1. For discussion of these passages see T. Brennan, 'Reservation in Stoic Ethics' ['Reservation'], *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 82 (2000), 149–77.

- [T4] Chrysippus was right to say: ‘As long as the future is uncertain to me I always hold to those things which are better adapted to obtaining the things in accordance with nature [*κατὰ φύσιν*]; for god himself has made me disposed to select these. But if I actually knew that I was fated now to be ill, I would even have an impulse to be ill. For my foot, too, if it had intelligence, would have an impulse to get muddy.’ (*Diss.* 2. 6. 9, trans. Long and Sedley)
- [T5] [T]he philosophers well say that if the good and excellent man knew what was going to happen, he would help on the processes of disease and death and maiming, because he would realize that this allotment comes from the orderly arrangement of the whole. . . . But as it is, seeing that we do not know beforehand what is going to happen, it is appropriate [*καθήκει*] to adhere to what is by nature more suited for selection, since for this we are born. (*Diss.* 2. 10. 5–6, trans. after Oldfather)<sup>85</sup>

Chrysippus here envisions a deliberative scenario in which there is a gap between the pattern of events nature has in fact laid down and what he himself is in a position to know. Under these conditions of uncertainty, these texts imply, it will be rational to select health. This result is then contrasted with a counterfactual scenario in which Chrysippus possesses fuller knowledge of the relevant order of events. In the light of this new knowledge it becomes rational to sacrifice health, selecting illness instead.

If we take the view that promoted indifferents ground or justify action in their own right, we must evidently describe the second scenario—the one in which Chrysippus operates with a fuller knowledge of nature’s plan—as a case of conflict between competing rational ends. If health is an independently valuable objective, as interpretations that ascribe intrinsic value to indifferents suppose, the selective value of health should retain its *pro tanto*, reason-giving force even when outweighed or overridden by countervailing considerations. On this account, Chrysippus’ rational determination to be sick, though sensitive to nature’s overall plan, will nonetheless conflict with at least one countervailing practical consideration: that his own health is promoted, a source of intrinsic

<sup>85</sup> Of this passage Bonhöffer remarks, ‘Aus dem letzten Satz sowie aus dem Zusammenhang und der ganzen Anschauung Epictets geht klar hervor, dass der Mensch für seine Gesundheit sorgen soll nicht wegen des wahrscheinlichen Vorteils, den er davon hat, sondern weil er dies, sofern nicht besondere Umstände vorliegen, als eine Forderung der Vernunft, als ein Gebot Gottes erkennt’ (A. Bonhöffer, *Die Ethik des Stoikers Epiktet* (Stuttgart, 1894), 194–5).

value, and deserving of pursuit as such. But the passage in no way suggests such an account. The rationality of selecting sickness does not here appear to consist in the fact that the value of conformity to nature as a whole outweighs the value of individual health. It rather consists in the fact that Chrysippus' sickness is revealed, in the light of his fuller knowledge, to be part of the single, uniquely rational course of events determined by Zeus and hence the only one to be favoured by a rational agent.

The lesson of these passages, then, is not that the value of indifferents may enter into conflict with a more comprehensive assessment of what nature requires, cutting against the course of action required by virtue. It is rather that the whole point of considering what is indifferent, of taking health into consideration at all, is to determine and approximate the single rational plan laid down by nature. The goal of the Stoic agent is to mirror, in her own beliefs, the order that Zeus has brought about in the cosmos, with all the synchronic and diachronic features that belong to it.<sup>86</sup> The judgement that an object is promoted should not, I take it, be analysed as an ascription of value to a discrete bit of this pattern, but as an assessment of the evidence that is relevant to understanding the pattern as a whole, so that this understanding can inform one's judgement about appropriate action in the case at hand.

This account fits well, moreover, with a range of passages in which indifferents are characterized simply as reference-points by which appropriate action is measured or ascertained. This characterization is clearest in Plutarch's discussion, which is highly polemical but nonetheless grounded in references to Chrysippus' own writings. The activities of the sage are undertaken, in Plutarch's vivid phrase, at the command of what is indifferent (*ἀπὸ προστάγματος τῶν ἀδιαφόρων*: *Comm. not.* 1064 C).<sup>87</sup> A command may of course be followed either because it is authoritative in its own right or because it indicates, in the mouth of a subordinate, the will of some higher authority. The latter construal fits very well with a point

<sup>86</sup> A point perhaps echoed in Posidonius' claim that the end is 'living as a student of the truth and order of the whole, and helping to promote this as far as possible' (fr. 96=LS 63], trans. Long and Sedley) and in Epictetus' remark that 'God has introduced man as a spectator of Himself and of his works; and not only as a spectator, but an interpreter [*ἐξηγητήν*] of them' (*Diss.* 1. 6. 19, trans. Oldfather). Cf. Cic. *ND* 2. 37.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Epict. *Diss.* 3. 24. 31–6; Sen. *De vita beata* 15. 7: 'in regno nati sumus; deo parere libertas est.'

firmly attested in other texts: that indifferents constitute a *metric* indicating what the goal of conformity to nature requires. Consider the following passages from Stobaeus, Plutarch, and Cicero, respectively:<sup>88</sup>

- [T6] The intermediate appropriate [τὸ μέσον καθήκον] is measured [παραμετρεῖσθαι] by certain indifferent things, selected in accord with or contrary to nature, which bring such a smooth flow that if we did not acquire them or reject them, except in special circumstances, we would not be happy. (Stob. *Ecl.* 2. 86, trans. Pomeroy)
- [T7] Chrysippus, they say, thinks that remaining alive or taking leave of life is measured [παραμετρεῖν] neither by goods nor by evils but by the intermediates in accordance with nature, which is why it sometimes becomes appropriate [καθήκον] for those who are happy to take leave of life and for those who are bad to remain. (Plut. *Stoic. repugn.* 1042 D, trans. after Cherniss)<sup>89</sup>
- [T8] It is the appropriate action to live [*officium est in vita manere*] when most of what one has is in accordance with nature. When the opposite is the case, or is envisaged to be so, then the appropriate action is to depart from life. . . . Thus the whole rationale [*ratio omnis*] for either remaining in or departing from life is to be measured [*metienda*] by reference to those intermediates that I mentioned above. (Cic. *Fin.* 3. 60–1, trans. Woolf)

Each of these texts affirms—in terminology Plutarch associates with Chrysippus—a material connection between the array of indifferents present to an agent and what is *kathēkon* for her to do. None of them suggests, however, that this connection amounts to a grounding relation or that indifferents constitute part of an action's justificatory basis. Indeed, in reporting the Stoic doctrine of suicide, Plutarch goes on to complain that the Stoics make their practical calculations (τίθεσθαι λογισμούς) with reference to circumstance that, by the Stoics' own lights, make no difference to an agent's happiness and are not themselves the proper objects of motivation (*Stoic. repugn.* 1042 E). In circumstances of extreme deprivation, faced everywhere with dispromoted outcomes, suicide may be appropriate and obligatory for a rational agent. This is not

<sup>88</sup> Here I am especially indebted to Tad Brennan, who drew my attention to Plutarch's use of *παραμετρεῖν* in response to an earlier draft of this paper. Brennan, 'Kathēkon', 50, notes a similar use by Epictetus at *Ench.* 30.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. *Comm. not.* 1063 D, where the same view and terminology are ascribed to Chrysippus.

because such outcomes present a threat to her happiness, however, but because they indicate that suicide conforms in this circumstance to nature's plan, which the sage must follow in order to preserve the conformity to nature that characterizes her activities while she remains alive. The appropriateness of suicide is dictated, as it were, by external circumstances, but it is justified on other grounds.

On the Chrysippean account, then, promoted and dispromoted indifferents appear to function much like the property of felicity as Paley conceives it: they provide a measure or index of what is appropriate. The promoted status of health is a sign or indication of what is wont (*εἰωθεῖν*) to come about in accordance with nature's design, an epistemic consideration to be assessed against a broader array of evidence. It encodes a small part of the sage's experience of nature and is useful as a guide to nature's rational pattern as long as (*μέχρις ἄν*) future events remain unclear (*ἄδηλα*). Accordingly, to say that a particular outcome is promoted is not to say that an agent thereby has a normative practical reason to select it. It is rather to say that an agent has a defeasible reason to *believe* that selecting it is what conformity to nature requires. In selecting what is promoted, the Stoic agent is doing her epistemic best, as it were, to conform to the single rational pattern laid down by nature.

## 7. Upshots and clarifications

If this account is correct, the selective value of promoted and dispromoted indifferents can best be understood in heuristic or epistemic terms, as an index of what customarily accords with nature's plan and a crucial part of the evidence on which rational judgements about *kathēkonta* must rely. On such an analysis, Stoic deliberation has a very different structure from that of maximizing accounts, and it is far closer in spirit to Paley's analysis. In particular, it should not be thought of as a weighing up of independent practical objectives whose value is such that it may be cancelled or overridden in mysterious and stipulative ways.<sup>90</sup> It should rather be understood on the model of probabilistic reasoning as an effort—rooted in experience of the natural order—to determine the single course of action

<sup>90</sup> I thank Tad Brennan for helping me clarify the details of this view and for some of the terminology in which I express it here.

that is most reasonably believed to accord with nature's overarching purpose.<sup>91</sup> An agent must look to indifferents in her actions, since their status as promoted or dispromoted is an indispensable indication of the course rational nature characteristically takes. The normative basis of her actions, however, is not a form of value that belongs to discrete or isolated features of the cosmos, but the goodness of conforming to the ordered whole of which she is a part. This interpretation satisfies the two desiderata I have mentioned. It explains, on the one hand, why indifferents must be taken into account in rational deliberation, but also why concern for indifferents can never cut against the virtuous course of action. If the point of looking to indifferents is simply to grasp the singular course of action that nature prescribes, indifferents cannot ground any axiological or justificatory remainder that undermines or competes with virtue.

This upshot rests ultimately on a difference between practical and epistemic considerations. Where (objective) practical reasons may conflict by counting in favour of distinct and incompatible practical ends, conflict among epistemic reasons can only be *prima facie*, arising though the imperfection of one's evidence.<sup>92</sup> Certainly epistemic reasons may conflict in the sense that some evidential considerations may appear to support a particular belief while others may undermine it, but these are to be explained by limitations in the agent's epistemic situation rather than by any conflict among the facts themselves. Though the aim of conformity to Zeus' *boulēsis* may be constrained by the limitations of the sage's vantage-point, so that she hedges her predictive judgements and always acts with reservation about the outcome, these limitations do not generate any conflict among her practical objectives or norma-

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Striker, 'Critical Notice', 99: 'Very briefly, the wise man will set out to build a house because he thinks it is reasonable for a human being to do so, reasonable in the sense that Nature is likely to want him to do this.'

<sup>92</sup> As Joseph Raz puts it, epistemic reasons 'are about the truth of the propositions for or against belief in which they are reasons. The weaker reasons are just less reliable guides to one and the same end' (Raz, 'Reasons: Practical and Adaptive', in D. Sobel and S. Wall (eds.), *Reasons for Action* (Cambridge, 2009), 37–57 at 44). Evidential reasons that are defeasible in the light of further evidence are sometimes characterized as *prima facie* reasons. Thus, for example, S. Hurley, *Natural Reasons: Personality and Polity* (Oxford, 1989), 133: 'We do admit the possibility in principle of real conflicts between reasons for action, and between reasons for action and for belief, but not between reasons for belief. . . . *Prima facie* [epistemic] reasons are like rules of thumb, that give us reasons provisionally but may turn out not to apply when we learn more about the situation at hand, in which case they have no residual reason-giving force.'

tive principles. Imperfect though they may be, the considerations that determine the sage's hormetic assents are directed towards securing the probable or approximate grasp of *orthos logos* on which virtue depends (*SVF* iii. 213, 214). Because the appropriate course of action will be the one she has most reason to believe conforms to *orthos logos*, the normative practical reasons that apply to her will uniformly favour it. For those reasons derive from the single imperative of conformity to nature and Zeus' will. This result is consistent with the Stoic view that rational action is justified by virtue alone.

Two further clarifications are perhaps in order. First, it is worth emphasizing that this account need not conflict with Stoic claims about *katalēpsis* or the secure knowledge of the sage. It is clear that the sage does not opine, and hence will not assent to any impression that is non-kataleptic or merely probable. She will not assent to an impression whose content is that she will be healthy tomorrow, since that content, though it may be plausible, is not something she is in a position to know. On the other hand, as Tad Brennan points out, there is nothing to prevent judgements of what is reasonable or probable from being incorporated into the infallible knowledge of the sage so long as the probability operator is included as part of the content to which the sage assents. And as Brennan makes clear, there is independent evidence to suggest that older Stoic theory, which acknowledges and makes room for probabilistic impressions, recognizes and formalizes this point.<sup>93</sup>

The sage, then, may assent to kataleptic impressions whose content is of the form *it is probable* [eulogon] *that I will be healthy tomorrow*, and the resulting impression may inform her assessment of the appropriate course of action. Such content need not be built directly into the hormetic assents that precipitate her impulses.<sup>94</sup> The *eulogon* operator might simply be incorporated within those beliefs about the future that inform her assent (or refusal to assent) to hormetic impressions tensed in the present. If the sage knows it to be (subjectively) probable that she will be healthy tomorrow, a particular action may be reasonable in relation to this knowledge and hence *kathēkon* for her to perform today. If she falls ill contrary to the reasonable expectation of health, this outcome does not threaten the secure status of her assents or the reasonableness of her action.

<sup>93</sup> See esp. Brennan, 'Reasonable' and 'Reservation'.

<sup>94</sup> Brennan, 'Reasonable', 323–4, and 'Reservation', 166–7.

She did not assent to any non-kataleptic impression about future events, but to a kataleptic impression that certain future events are probable on the available evidence. In this way kataleptic judgements about likelihoods or probabilities may play a role in assessing the course of action that is reasonably thought to conform to Zeus' purpose.

Second, it should be noted that nothing in this analysis requires us to suppose that facts about the status or availability of indifferents are the *only* considerations that figure in the deliberations of the Stoic agent or bear on her judgement that an action is *kathēkon*. Here it is helpful to distinguish, as Rachel Barney does, between the supposition that every deliberate action involves some discrimination or selection *among* indifferents—what Barney calls the *exhaustiveness of selection*—and the view that considerations about indifferents alone must provide a complete specification of appropriate action—what Barney calls the *deliberative sufficiency* of indifferents.<sup>95</sup> There is good evidence that the Stoics accept the former principle, that they regard every deliberate action as an engagement with things external to virtue and therefore as an instance of selection or discrimination among indifferents. In this respect indifferents are analogous, as I mentioned before, to the formless matter shaped by Zeus' own rational agency throughout the cosmos: they are the material through which human agency works. On the other hand, as Barney observes, the paradigmatic instances of appropriate action recognized by the Stoics do not appear to answer to any straightforward maximization of promoted outcomes, nor indeed to any deliberative procedure applied only to considerations having to do with the status of indifferents.

This feature of the Stoic view marks an important difference from Paley's account. In contrast to Paley's view, there is no single promoted outcome such as pleasure whose presence is an infallible indicator of right action in Stoic theory. Stoic sources rather suggest a picture of deliberation as rooted in the complex interplay of two broad types of consideration.<sup>96</sup> On the one hand, there are facts about what is regularly allotted, as a matter of nature's design, to the individual constitutions of animate organisms, and these facts seem to underwrite the basic distinction between what is promoted and

<sup>95</sup> Barney, 'Puzzle', 314.

<sup>96</sup> For this way of thinking about Stoic deliberation I am indebted to Tad Brennan's *The Stoic Life*, 203–30, and 'Kathēkon', 49–55.

dispromoted. Thus food is promoted because of its status as something that nature intends in most cases for organisms with a certain metabolic constitution. But considerations of a second broad type may also play a role. Even in non-rational animals *kathēkonta* are often, as it were, other-regarding. As Chrysippus clearly emphasized, the appropriate activities of animals include care for offspring and for other members of their own kind, as well as, in some cases, co-operation across species. Likewise in the human case, social roles and relations play a basic role in fixing appropriate action. Wider considerations of this sort seem to be what Cicero has in mind when he speaks of *cum officio selectio*, a selection of indifferents that answers not simply to the needs of self-preservation but to the broader system of relations to which one is subject (*Fin.* 3. 20).

Determining the selection of indifferents that most accords with nature, then, need not take the form of an algorithmic calculation whose only inputs are the selective values of indifferents. Considerations grounded in a broad experience of nature may inform the selection and allotment of indifferents in complex ways. The various factors to be taken into account—that health is promoted, that this is my child, that available food is scarce—may all function as signs and indications pointing to a single action I must now perform if I am to preserve a virtuous conformity to nature. This fits closely with a point compellingly argued by Brad Inwood: the Stoics appear to have conceived of appropriate action as ‘situationally fluid’, not easily captured or codified by narrowly specific rules.<sup>97</sup>

If this proposal is correct, then one way in which indifferents constitute the material (*hulē*) and starting-point (*archē*) of virtue is by supplying some of the considerations on which an assessment of the course of action that best conforms to *orthos logos* in a given case must be based. This feature of Stoic theory is clearly a consequence of a systematic attempt to work out the Socratic dictum that virtue consists in knowledge and of the conviction that the relevant form of knowledge is knowledge of what characteristically accords with nature’s ends.<sup>98</sup> In treating rationally justified action as a consequence of assent to hormetic impressions, the Stoics effectively treat the norms of practical justification as epistemic norms.

<sup>97</sup> ‘Rules and Reasoning in Stoic Ethics’, in Ierodiakonou (ed.), *Topics in Stoic Philosophy*, 71–94 at 98.

<sup>98</sup> On which see esp. S. Menn, ‘Physics as a Virtue’, *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, 11 (1995), 1–34.

The difficulties that arise in understanding the place of indifferents in their theory are due, in part, to a failure to appreciate that this theory applies wholly cognitive standards in its appraisal of actions.

Such a conception is borne out, I have suggested, by the few texts that preserve an account of practical deliberation that is securely free of Academic influence. At the same time, it is hardly surprising to find that criticisms of the indifferents doctrine preserved in Academic sources fail to register the subtleties of the Chrysippean view or the epistemic import of the older Stoic theory. Most of the criticisms presented by Plutarch and Alexander are clearly modelled on the criticisms advanced by Carneades in the century after Chrysippus lived and wrote. It is not difficult to see how such criticisms could have been formulated against a view that combines the systematic pursuit of external objectives with an insistence that these objectives are not practical ends in their own right. The dilemma with which I began rests on the supposition that any objective that intelligibly structures deliberate action must be regarded as a practical objective of this sort. This assumption is closely related to the Carneadean premiss recorded by Cicero and embedded in the *Carneadea divisio*: that any coherent *technē* must have a justificatory end external to the *technē* itself (*Fin.* 5. 16). Carneades' *ad hominem* use of this premiss is clearly intended to force the Stoics towards a mixed account of the end, for once it is conceded that indifferents play a justificatory role, either they must be incorporated within an account of the *telos* or else the Stoic commitment to rational eudaimonism must be abandoned.

If the view I have offered is correct, this attack can be seen to rest on a distortion of the older Stoic picture and, in particular, on a conflation of distinct roles, justificatory and epistemic, the Stoics assign to virtue and indifferents. The Stoics are plainly prepared to concede that appropriate action must be referred in an important respect to objects and states of affairs that are not themselves parts of the human good. Plutarch makes much of this point, but Cicero matter-of-factly presents it as the Stoic view.<sup>99</sup> But this concession does not show that the Stoics envision indifferents in the role of practical ends, as objectives that justify the practice of virtue in the way that health justifies the practice of medicine. It simply reflects the fact that the end as they do envision it *consists* in a cognitive

<sup>99</sup> e.g. at *Fin.* 3. 60: 'sed cum ab his omnia proficiscantur officia, non sine causa dicitur ad ea referri omnes nostras cogitationes.'

grasp of these things and of their place in the cosmic order. Given this cognitive analysis of virtue and the cognitive account of motivation it supports, it is no threat to the Stoic account of the *telos* to acknowledge that the content of virtuous action can be known or specified only by reference to what is indifferent. The evidence suggests that Chrysippus took pains to characterize indifferents not as practical ends in their own right, but as one metric by which the normative regularities of nature are cognized.

The Stoics therefore have an intelligible reply to the dilemma framed by the Academy. They need not concede that promoted indifferents contribute in any way to happiness, nor that their doctrine of indifferents conflicts with their identification of happiness and virtue. On their account, indifferents do not constitute discrete objectives whose value can be weighed or assessed together with the goodness of virtue. Indeed, on the interpretation I have offered, indifferents do not enter into the deliberations of the Stoic agent as practical objectives at all. Instead, they constitute one class of epistemic considerations on which a rational agent will rely in her effort to understand and conform to the rational pattern articulated in nature as a whole. On such a view, practical deliberation is not conceived as a weighing of competing practical objectives, each valuable in its own right, but as an interpretation or reading of evidence, undertaken so that an agent can bring her own cognition to the fullest extent possible into conformity with the uniquely rational pattern specified in Zeus' *boulēsis*.

This interpretation has a final, important consequence for understanding the historical place of Stoicism. The Stoics have been regarded—by Sidgwick, for example—as transitional figures standing at a juncture between classical attempts to subsume all rational aims within a single account of the good and later recognitions of the duality of practical reason.<sup>100</sup> The tendency to view Stoic theory in this light seems partly to be due to the supposedly insecure status that theory assigns to externals, treating them both as indifferent and (it is alleged) as rational objectives to be pursued for their own sake. Isaiah Berlin once remarked, in an essay on Machiavelli, that the Stoics systematically uphold a monistic account of reason.<sup>101</sup> On my account of indifferents, this assessment is precisely correct. The

<sup>100</sup> H. Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics* (London, 1962), 92, 105, 129.

<sup>101</sup> 'A Special Supplement: The Question of Machiavelli', *New York Review of Books*, 17.7 (4 Nov. 1971), 20–32.

older Stoics brilliantly insist on the unity of reason, assimilating it to a theoretical understanding of the cosmos as the single end that grounds and secures right action. The fracturing of this conception should be traced not to the Stoics themselves and their actual doctrine of indifferents, but to the far more worldly and Machiavellian dialectic of Carneades, who argued (in a way that has influenced far too many critics, ancient and modern) that the real meaning of Stoicism is this: that we should cultivate the craft of virtue not for its own sake, but for the sake of securing and enjoying the fruits of nature it may bring (Cic. *Acad.* 2. 131; *Tusc.* 5. 84–5; *Fin.* 4. 15; 5. 20). As I have shown, a proper understanding of early Stoic theory rather confirms that the goodness of virtue is the only ground of rational action.

Colgate University

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