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**NATURAL DEVELOPMENT,
RATIONALITY, AND
RESPONSIBILITY IN STOIC ETHICS**

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UNDERSTANDING OF BEING:

MYTH AND PHILOSOPHY

From the evolutionary perspective, a moral dimension of being appears only with the formation of organized living forms. And its complexity increases with the complexity of the organizational level of the living creature. It assumes its full development at the level of humans when a new quality appears in the evolutionary ladder, namely the human psyche with all its characteristics and properties. Though we have an intuitive understanding of ethics and morals at their fundamental level based on biological mechanisms produced by the communal living, man enlarged the scope and breadth of situations which require rules of behavior, by his cultural development.

The Myth (*muthos*) was the early form of human dealing with the "understanding of our way of being in the universe." The word originally meant "a story" and there was no difference here between truth and fable. The problem of differentiation between these ideas did not exist. Moreover, the myth gave rise to magic and incantations as a practical means of controlling events in life. Once, however, the credibility of myth was questioned and people sought answers to their cosmic and existential questions on a rational basis, the crisis arose and a need to develop a better system of explanation.

Thus theories were developed that the myths of Homer and Hesiod were symbols of the truth and later they allowed the Jewish (e.g. Philo of Alexandria, 20 BCE-50 CE) and Christian (Origen ca 185-ca 254 CE) apologists to defend their scriptures by an allegorical interpretation of the fables. In the 20th century studies of the societies in which the myth is still regarded as truth, led to the development of new theories about myth based on the observation of its persistent social functions:

- sacred stories sustain the life and unity of the community;
- provide archetypal models for meaningful human activities;
- provide structure for explanation of the natural/human world.

Myth can be divided into two different types. One is the **Central myth**, which provides an archetypal model

of structure and function of the community. It is the heart of culture which is sustained by retelling and reenacting the story. Such was a myth of "chosen people" in the Jewish culture which sustained the group against all adversarial vicissitudes of their history. The myth outlived itself when it was contradicted by the growing evidence of facts which demonstrated that communities cannot be isolated and explanations of human existence require more universal basis. Thus the political and social circumstances in the first-century Palestine gave rise to the original Christian myth. The other type is the **Peripheral myth**, which serves as a model of explanations for details of everyday life in a community; it provides meaning for the existence of individuals, establishes conventions and serves as a basis for philosophical reflection and elaboration of a system of thought.

Thus we may consider that myths are true in the pragmatic sense as effective and useful, but they are not truth in the absolute sense (especially in comparison with modern science). But the argument may be presented that the scientific approach has no regard for the human experience which is expressed by myth. Disregarding the truth of myth leads to a crisis and breakdown of the structure of society (as it happened in Greece at the end of the archaic age, in Europe at the end of the Middle Ages, and in modern times with the myths of Nazism or Marxism). Howard Johnson considers our history as succession of crises in understanding of our existential meaning. The survival is brought about by reconstruction of the myth and creation of a new understanding. In the process, myths become divested from their supernatural meaning and more and more secularized. That this is true is attested by the fact that people continue to be fascinated with myth. The myth thus is an expression of ontological crisis and a tool to overcome it and preserve a community. To be authentic, however, and perform its function, it must be believed.

The original Christian myth based on Hebrew tradition and mixed with Greek philosophy, and Greek and Buddhist moral outlooks, developed from the IVth century into an institutionalized and a rigid, repressive, and morally bankrupt political system. Thus it betrayed its original goal and became an obstacle for moral development of humanity. Moreover, today's scholarship was able to positively demonstrate how the myth was fabricated, thus stripping it of the aura of mysticism and mystery. Nevertheless, it is needless to say that the myth will not die, but will be modified and constantly adapted to the sum total of our human experience and knowledge. As the recent development of new religions, such as Gates of Heaven and the UFO Cult attest, myth will not die because there will always be people too busy, too lazy intellectually or not intelligent enough to reflect and search for intellectual and rational answers. Myth provides an easy, comfortable, and often aesthetically and emotionally pleasing substitute for serious effort. Once believed it can lead to astonishing acts, like an induced voluntary and joyful mass suicide, attesting to its extreme power. Nevertheless, it has to be defended against the destructive influences of inquiry and apologists for it often will find a recourse to allegoric interpretations as it has happened in the past.

But the picture of the possibilities of "understanding our way of being" would not be complete without discussing the other way, the way of the reflective mind which existed simultaneously with the myth, though it was not so popular and available to everyone. When we ask questions and try to develop rational answers to them, we practice philosophy that, in a broad sense of the word, also includes scientific inquiry. This way of philosophical reflection was so aptly described by the Stoic philosopher and statesman, Seneca:

Philosophy is not an occupation of a popular nature, nor is it pursued for the sake of self-advertisement. Its concern is not with words, but with facts. It is not carried on with the object of passing the day in an entertaining sort of way and taking the boredom out of leisure. It moulds and builds the personality, orders one's life, regulates one's conduct, shows one what one should do and what one should leave undone, sits at the helm and keeps one on the correct course as one is tossed about in perilous seas. Without it no one can lead a life free of fear or worry. Every hour of the day countless situations arise that call for advice, and for that advice we have to look to philosophy.

In ancient Greece philosophical reflection existed parallel to myth and religious practice and several philosophical systems vied for acceptance and verification in practical life. The most complete and influential system of philosophy that served as a practical wisdom and guidance in the everyday life was the Stoic philosophy founded by Zeno of Citium (ca 334--262 BCE) and developed further by Cleanthes (303--233 BCE) and Chrysippus (282-- ca 206 BCE). This philosophy was practiced in everyday life by people like Cicero (106-43 BCE), Epictetus (55-135 CE), Seneca (4 BCE - 65 CE), and Marcus Aurelius (121-180 CE). It is a monistic philosophy in which the universe is represented as one entity of many things and events

bounded together and governed by universal law—the *logos*. The human individual is but one part of this cosmic reality. Stoic ethics, as built on natural principles, was adopted by early pre-Nicaean Christianity and today it is the foundation of all secular types of ethical systems.

FUNDAMENTALS OF STOIC ETHICS

The Stoics regarded ethics as an imprecise "science" just as Aristotle did, and sought to establish a set of values and practical principles of conduct that would be as securely based as the laws of Nature.

Stoic ethics was developed into a formal and coherent system by Chrysippus who subdivided it into three sections: 1. dealing with classification of ethical conceptions; 2. dealing with the common view, sciences and the virtues thence arising; 3. dealing with things good and evil. The intellectual procedure of the Stoics was later imitated by Spinoza and Kant.

According to Nature

The Stoic metaphysics requires that the subject of ethics, good and bad, virtue, vice, happiness can be analyzed only from the perspective of accordance with universal Nature, accommodating at the same time the nature of particular things. Everything that accords with the nature of a creature necessarily has positive value and anything that is contrary to a creature's nature has necessarily negative value. The nature of anything is that structure and pattern of behavior which universal Nature has ordained as appropriate or in the interest of the creature concerned.

Stoics believed that everything that happens happens according to Nature and what is unnatural or contrary to Nature is a description of events that applies only to the particular things still for the benefit of the whole. If Nature's activity is viewed as contradictory it is due only to the limitations of our human vision. Nature does not will the actions of bad people, it only harmonizes the dissonances. Thus according to Chrysippus virtue cannot exist without vice.

Man as a Moral Agent

Man, by receiving reason from Nature is an active and conscious, autonomic moral agent participating in the processes of the universe. Man has the capability to harmonize his actions with nature: whether he does it or not is left up to him.

Man is equipped by Nature with "impulses" to virtue or "seeds of knowledge" which serve as instruments for building of his character. By using them he is able to direct himself and develop a character which is defined as a sustained disposition. The process requires an internal effort and external influences may prevent him from developing a disposition harmonizing with Nature.

Man, being an autonomous agent develops his own character even though it is controlled by the law of Nature, the law of cause and effect. Man is not responsible for the environment in which he finds himself, but he is responsible for the way he acts in relation to this environment.

Man is equipped with the capacity to make a moral judgment on human well-being which is related to his inner attitude and his state of mind. It is illustrated by the simile of a dog attached to a cart. The dog can run willingly and, if he does not do so, he will be compelled to. So the cart represents the man's external situation which he cannot control, but the man himself can determine whether he will run willingly or not. The same is aptly illustrated in the Cleanthes' hymn to Zeus:

Guide me, O Zeus, and Destiny, whither I have been appointed by you.

For I will follow freely; and if, grown bad, I prove unwilling, I shall follow no less.

However, of all the external circumstances only some are the making of Nature, most are of our own doing. Thus we should consider the results of our actions. In order to stress further the active role of man in deciding on his destiny, the Stoics emphasized the importance of education. The initial potentialities of man are such that with training he can achieve the disposition to act in accord with the moral order of Nature.

Development of Rationality and Pattern of Behavior

According to the Stoics Nature works by allowing a stepwise development of rationality, as the development of an individual proceeds, and with it the moral awareness through the mechanism of an "impulse" (*horme*):

An animal's first impulse, say the Stoics, is to self preservation, because Nature from the outset endears it to itself, as Chrysippus affirms in the first book of his work *On Ends* when his words are, 'The dearest thing to every animal is its own constitution thereof,' for it was not likely that Nature should estrange the living thing from itself or that she would leave the creature she has made without either estrangement from or affection for its own constitution. We are forced then to conclude that Nature in constituting the animal made it near and dear to itself; for so it comes to repel all that is injurious and give free access to all that is serviceable or akin to it. As for the assertion made by some people that pleasure is the object to which the first [primary] impulse of animals is directed, it is shown by the Stoics to be false. For pleasure if it is really felt, they declare to be a by-product, which never comes until Nature by itself has sought and found the means suitable to the animal's experience or constitution; it is an aftermath comparable to the condition of animals thriving and plants attaining full bloom. And Nature, they say, made no difference originally between plants and animals, for she regulates the life of plants too, in their case without impulse and sensation just as also certain processes go on as a vegetative kind in us. But when in the case of animals impulse has been superseded, whereby they are enabled to go in quest of their proper aliment, for then, say the Stoics, Nature's role is to follow the direction of impulse. But when reason by way a more perfect leadership has been bestowed on the beings we call rational, for them life according to reason rightly becomes the natural life. For reason supervenes as the craftsman of impulse.

The first natural impulse of a living creature, e.g. of a child, is directed not towards the outside world, but towards itself; it becomes self-aware and develops an "affection" for itself. This statement about primary impulse is an empirical statement and the logical starting-point for Stoic ethics. Self-preservation (searching for food, defense against enemies, procreation) would be the only natural and right thing to follow if humans did not have the faculty of reason.

One consequence [of this starting-point] is this primary classification: Stoics say that that has value which is either itself in accordance with Nature or such as to bring about that state of affairs; accordingly it is worthy of being selected because it possesses something of sufficient moment to be valued, whereas the opposite of this is not to be valued. We have then established as basic principles that those things which are in accordance with Nature are to be acquired for their own sake, and their opposites are to be rejected. The first appropriate function of a creature is to maintain itself in its natural condition. The second, that it should seize hold of the things which accord with Nature and banish those which are the opposite. Once this procedure of selection and rejection has been discovered, the next consequence is selection exercised appropriately, then such selection performed continuously; finally, selection which is absolutely consistent and in complete agreement with Nature. At this point for the first time that which can truly be called good begins to be present in a man and understood. For a man's first affection is towards those things which are in accordance with Nature. But as soon as he acquired the capacity for understanding or rather, a stock of rational concepts, and has seen the regularity and harmony of conduct, he values this far higher than everything for which he had previously felt affection, and he draws the rational conclusion that that constitutes the highest human good which is worthy of praise and desirable for its own sake. In this harmony consists the good which is the standard of all things; and so virtuous action and virtue itself, which is reckoned the only good thing, though later in origin, is the

only thing to be desired through its intrinsic nature and worth. And none of the primary objects of natural affiliation is desirable for its own sake.

Thus, the pattern of human behavior changes from a purely animal-like instinctive pattern to a fully rational one and involves, according to Cicero, five stages. They represent the development of human nature, but only a few people will reach the highest stages, because the process is not independent of a man's own effort. The "function" or goal of man in this process is attainment of perfection of his nature. The term used by Cicero is *officium* (corresponding to the English office, duty or task, as the office of an official charged with certain duties) and the Greek term is *kathekon*. One could not talk about the "duty" of an animal or of an infant, but rather of their natural function. The term duty becomes appropriate in stages three-through-five in human development as the changes in behavior become now functions of a rational being.

Development of the Concept of Values

What has value for the Stoics? They determined that "things according to nature" constitute a particular class of things that have value the opposite of which are things contrary to nature. In that class there were distinguished things which were defined as "primary things according to (or contrary) to nature." The term "primary" specifies the chronological order of things and it refers to the primary impulse towards things necessary for self-preservation (e.g. food of a proper kind, shelter, parental affection etc.) common to all animals.

But human individuals, along the stages of their moral development, find a wider range of "good" things than irrational animals: e.g. health, technical competence, beauty, high repute etc. A child acquires these things and rejects the opposites by trying and learning in its second stage of development. Some things remain indifferent, neither good nor bad.

Things naturally "attractive" or "to be rejected" become, in the third stage, raw material for selection and rejection which will be performed by developing reason which will also modify the pattern of behavior. Now the function of man is to perform appropriate acts (*kathekonta*) which are impulses directed by reason: "That which reason persuades one to do;" "Befitting acts are all those which reason prevails with to do;" "That which when done admits of reasonable justification." Inappropriate acts are defined as the "opposite way." Among such things to be selected, Stoics listed honoring one's parents, brothers and sisters, native land, taking proper care of one's health, sacrificing one's property etc. Taking care of one's health is unconditionally appropriate, whereas the sacrifice of one's property is only conditionally appropriate. The appropriateness of these things rests in the fact that they remain in accord with the nature of a rational being. The range of appropriate actions grows with the growth of rationality and includes the impulse for "civic association." These social principles derive from the natural impulse for familial and extrafamilial attraction implanted by Nature and are the starting point for justice. This natural attitude of attraction Stoics called *oikeiosis*—attitude of attraction to things which belong to oneself. Through this moral development community life and virtue are recognized as pre-eminently "things belonging to human nature."

Disposition, Virtue, and Intermediate Goods

The habit of continuous and consistent selection of appropriate actions (and rejection of inappropriate actions) becomes a disposition characterizing an ideal good man, a sage. His pattern of behavior is now classified as virtue and is in tune with Nature and rationality. He selects natural things to do because they are right things to do and they accord with virtue, i.e. the nature of a perfect rational being.

There are natural things which may be "advantageous" or "disadvantageous" but they are not constituents of virtue. E.g. wealth by itself has no moral value, though it is preferable to poverty. It acquires moral value only through the agent's principles or manner of acting.

The distinction between virtue and the other things which accord with Nature rests on the specific way in which they accord with Nature. Virtue is a special function or goal of a rational being that applies absolutely to all mature human beings. A rational being is naturally predisposed to prefer wealth to poverty but it is not

the special function of a rational being to possess. There is no difference in moral worth whether one is poor or wealthy.

To make a distinction between virtue and everything else, the Stoics described everything else by the term "indifferent" and used the terms good, useful to virtue, and bad, useless to vice. Only virtue is desirable, so it is "choiceworthy"; the rest is selected or taken.

Virtuous Action and the Goal of Life

The goal of life is, according to the Stoics, virtue and virtuous action. To achieve it man must aim at particular goals which can be specified precisely. These are objectively preferable to their opposites. Later Stoics differentiated a comprehensive goal, which is the ultimate goal, namely virtuous behavior regardless of whether or not the intermediate goal is achieved. Diogenes of Babylon, Chrysippus' successor defined the goal of life: "To act rationally [i.e. with right reasoning, *eulogos*] in the selection of natural advantages."

Things naturally "advantageous" and "disadvantageous" are necessary conditions of virtue, but are themselves not constituents of virtue. They are necessary because complete knowledge of that which is good presupposes and arises out of a disposition to select natural advantages and reject the opposites. Moreover, they provide the material for the exercise of virtue and vice. Every virtuous action must aim at bringing about some change in the external world.

The distinction between advantages and disadvantages is valid independently of the agent's intentions and allows specification of a set of intermediate goods that will "normally" (without the presence of exceptional circumstances) include anything aimed at by a good man: "So long as the succession of events is uncertain to me I always cling fast to the things which are better adapted for attainment of natural advantages; for God himself has given me the capacity to select such things. But if I knew that sickness was ordained for me now, I would pursue sickness."

If the pursuit of an intermediate good, e.g. health is not successful, the moral worth of the action is not affected and the lack of success does not show that the agent was wrong to try. It is preferable to succeed, but not morally more worthwhile. Intermediate goods do not have any moral value in themselves, but they provide the material to exercise rational discrimination which is morally good.

Presumed Difficulty with the Stoic Position on Intermediate Goods

The Stoics were criticized for their attitude towards intermediate goods, e.g. by Carneades, who insisted that the attainment of natural advantages implied acceptance of them as a goal. But he did not maintain that virtue on its own is sufficient to provide well-being. Another objection was expressed by Posidonius, who claimed that life consistent with reason should include "doing everything possible for the sake of the primary natural advantages."

The distinction between the "good" and the "preferable" was also attacked by the eclectic Academic philosopher Antiochus of Ascalon: "The good," so Antiochus argues, "ought to include the satisfaction of these natural impulses from which it is supposedly derived." He criticized the Stoics for treating man as if he were a disembodied mind needing nothing from the physical environment. He asked why these natural advantages are to be selected if the possession of them is not something good? He claimed that virtue is not the only good thing even if it outstrips the worth of everything else. Natural advantages are bodily "goods" which make a difference, however slight, to the sum total of human well-being.

The question thus arises whether the distinction between the "good" and the "preferable" is a valid one and the answer cannot be unequivocal since it depends on the critic's own moral theory. The Stoics, however, were consistent in their position and drew a line between moral value in a strict sense and any material or physical value of things.

Difficulty with the Stoic Concept of Virtue

There is one more apparent general difficulty with the Stoic concept of virtue. The Stoics claimed that virtue, being the comprehensive goal of human nature, is wholly constitutive of *eudaimonia* or welfare or well-being. They claimed that a man, in order to fare well, needs nothing but virtue and as virtue is something absolute, welfare admits of no degrees. It seems that Aristotle had a more realistic position when he defined *eudaimonia* as "activity of the soul in accordance with virtue." He recognized also that it required an adequate provision of possessions like health and other "goods." The notion of welfare seems to be logically tied up with notions like profitable, useful, and beneficial, and the Stoics seemed to recognize this themselves. But for the Stoics virtue, constituting moral welfare, is profitable to its possessor in the moral sense. The problem arises when people admit welfare as "the good for man" because then it seems to be arbitrary and false to assert that nothing except virtue identifies the content of welfare. It becomes more visible if we consider the welfare of others. For example if we consider a situation where our action would prevent the death of someone else, the Stoics would admit that a good man would do everything in his power to prevent or avert the disaster. But, we would agree with the Stoics that the virtuous man who so acted would fare well, if the virtuous acts are beneficial to the agent. At the same time, part of the benefit must consist in the external object which is the goal. Stoics would agree that the object has value, but it is "preferred" and not "good" in the strict moral sense. Many would, however, think that it makes far better moral sense to say that both the action and its external object were "good." Good was done by the virtuous man's efforts to promote another's welfare. Still more good would have come from success.

The Stoics recognized rightly that goodness of intention or the principle of an action must be evaluated independently of a man's achieving some desirable result. This emphasis is one of the most important aspects of their ethics. The intentions or motives are commendable because of the good which the agent sought to produce.

The difficulties discussed arose because of the Stoics' terminological distinction, which introduces more confusion than clarification, and their emphasis on psychological equilibrium i.e. of man's avoidance of all changes in strong emotions.

If we call the "good" the "preferable," following the Stoic terminology, we obscure the relation between the value of a morally good action and the value of the change in the world at which it is aimed. Moreover, we might argue that a man's moral worth depends partly on his attitude towards success or failure at achieving morally desirable results. We might be inclined to think less of a man who felt no sorrow or regret that he was unable to avert the disaster (e.g. accidental death) in spite of all his efforts to do so. But for the Stoics the virtuous man having done everything in his power, does not feel pity or regret. He accepts the result without reacting emotionally. The moral value is not dependent on one's emotional state. This attitude is easily understood and consistent in the context of the whole Stoic philosophy. For the external circumstance are, for the Stoic, in his power only to the extent that he can choose to accept them or not when they occur. He would accept them gladly if he knew that they contribute to the well-being of the universe as a whole. Before the events happen, he may be more favorably disposed to some events than to others and would prefer all manner of things for other people and himself to their opposites and so far as he seeks to bring about these preferable states of affairs, his preferences are perfectly rational, i.e. they fully accord with an objective assessment of the relative merits of external things as determined by Nature itself. But he does not regard the things which he prefers as good (morally), nor does he desire them.

As for the attitude towards the future, the Stoic maintains the attitude of preference or rejection. He is in no position to judge their goodness and therefore views it with indifference and leaves it to Nature.

Moral Well-Being of the Agent

For similar reasons the Stoic's own well-being is to be "in his power" and therefore he cannot depend on the attainment of results which may not be realized. Nature ordained that a man can and should attain well-being solely through what is in his power. His disposition as a rational man is in his power, i.e. through virtue, the

only good. Virtue is consequently a rational disposition and its value is something different in kind from natural advantages. These are things which he can take if he encounters them, but virtue is something he can choose irrespective of circumstances. Natural advantages supply man with objective goods at which he can choose to aim and the material for forming his own moral principles. They are necessary to virtue only as means by which it can be exercised and not as things which it needs for their own sake.

Development of Virtue

Virtue is one thing to which "good" belongs in a strict and necessary sense; nothing else. An action can be good if it participates in virtue. Several abstract definitions of virtue were given:

1. *Virtue is a disposition and faculty of the governing principle of the soul, "or rather reason itself, consistent, firm, and nonwavering."*
2. *Virtue is the goal which nature has laid down for man.*
3. *Virtue arises from the patterns of behavior of the earlier stages of man's development. From them we find that virtue is a kind of "knowledge" or "art."*

Thus, in general terms virtue is a disposition of the soul which can be subdivided into four primary virtues: **practical wisdom, justice, moderation, and courage**. Each of them is described in terms of knowledge (as in the Socratic and Platonic tradition) and can still be subdivided further. E.g. courage is the knowledge of things which should be endured. It is necessary to have knowledge which belongs to any particular virtue in order to have the knowledge constitutive of virtue as a whole. The virtuous man's knowledge is grasped by his intellect. He uses the evidence of sense-perception as preliminary steps to its acquisition and arrives at the "knowledge of the good:"

After the mind, by means of rational inference, has climbed up from these things which are in accordance with Nature, it arrives at the idea of the good. But we perceive the good and name it so, not as a result of addition or growth or comparison with other things, but through its own specific nature. Honey, though it is very sweet, is perceived to be sweet by its own taste and not through comparison with other (sweet) things; similarly that good which is our subject, is something of the highest value, but this assessment is valid because of the kind of thing the good is, not because of its size.

Similar language was used by Plato, who said that a philosopher ascends to knowledge of the good by the help of hypotheses about the objects of sight and intellect. Things which accord with Nature are the stepping-stones to reach a principle that cannot be inferred directly from them. They are the preferable objects of instructive, and later, rational selection. The fact that the "good" is not intuited by a simple comparison with these natural advantages does not mean that "the good" falls outside things which accord with Nature. Different things provide an idea of being in accordance with Nature, but the "good" accords with Nature in a sense that is beyond anything else. Other things provide the mind a ladder, a help to a position from which "the good" is directly apprehended through its own nature. In practical terms no account is fully adequate. To know "the good" entails discovering the principle of conduct which satisfies the general idea of "accordance with Nature" formed by deduction, introspection, and the particular facts of human nature—that man is a rational being with the capacity to understand and participate in the universal activities of Nature.

Seneca specifies how we attain our first concept of the good and virtue. It is not innate endowment and it would be absurd to suppose that man hit upon it by chance. Antecedents of moral knowledge are "observation" and "comparison of repeated acts":

"Our school of philosophers claims that what is good and of moral worth is learned by means of 'analogy.'" He explains that by analogy with physical health (a natural condition which is familiar to us), we have inferred that there is such a thing as health of mind ("something just and good is conceived naturally"). To reason by analogy the Stoics considered natural as well:

There are certain acts of generosity, or of humanity, or of courage which have amazed us. We begin to admire them as if they were perfect. But they conceal many faults which are hidden by their appearance of something brilliant and we have overlooked these. Nature bids us to augment praiseworthy actions ... From them, therefore, we have derived an idea of remarkable goodness.

From the idea of bodily health we develop a concept of the health of mind. To give a content to it from observation and comparison of behavior of individual men we form an idea of courage. The individual man who is always consistent with himself in every action, good under the direction of a disposition—in him we recognize that virtue has been perfected. Thus according to this theory our general concept of virtue is refined by observation.

The Paradigm of the Sage

Does this mean that the moral concepts that men form are relative to experience? The Stoics tried to avoid the problem of relativism by setting up the sage as a paradigm and giving a detailed description of his disposition and of the kinds of things that he does. They realized, however, that imitation of the sage, of the paradigm of the actual good man cannot ensure virtue but it can certainly set a man in the right direction to secure it.

The sage is defined by his moral expertise—which includes several tests:

-- steadiness and orderliness, but he may act differently according to changing events;

-- timely behavior e.g. Stoics justified suicide on the ground that in extreme circumstances it may be the rational thing to do. Though the preservation of human life accords with human nature, it is not unconditionally appropriate;

-- absence of passion; the sage does not regard pleasure as something good nor pain as something evil; it does not mean he is insensitive, but they do not move his soul excessively, he is impassive towards them;

-- like Aristotle, the Stoics rejected the emotional attitude that accompanies actions as an index of moral character.

These objective qualities form a canon of excellence, though the Stoic philosophers themselves did not pass it.

Man naturally develops a concept of value and Nature's part is to give man the ability to think analogically. But virtue or knowledge of what is truly good does not follow necessarily from these faculties. To know what is truly good, a man has to consider what is involved in the performance of a virtuous action and to ask himself why a man who acts apparently well in one sphere can fail to do so in another. He has to grasp what is needed if a man is to act well in all spheres at all times.

The conditions indicated by Cicero and Seneca are orderliness, propriety, consistency, and harmony. To know what all of these are is to know what is good. The "good" is prior in value to anything else, but with respect to any individual, it is posterior in time to other valuable things, because a man can recognize "the good" after he has learned to select natural advantages and to reject their opposites in a regular and systematic pattern of action.

Natural advantages include all those states of affairs which, though not constituents of virtue, are objectively (or naturally) preferable to their opposites. They are intermediate goods, but it is not necessary to be a good man to aim at these things. On the contrary, the good man was aiming at them before he became good and all men do so to a lesser or greater degree. It is not a special mark of a good man to select natural advantages, but to do so in a certain way and on the basis of certain principles. Natural advantages are neither good or bad in the final analysis.

Appropriate action considered independently of the character of its agent must be judged as "intermediate." But in terms of the agent's character, every action, whether appropriate or not is either "perfect" or "faulty." The "faultiness" of an appropriate act may have nothing to do with its external object (not that it fails to secure the object aimed at, it does not have to achieve it—it is sufficient in certain circumstances to have tried), only inappropriate acts are faulty in this respect. An appropriate act performed by someone who is not a sage lacks the fundamental characteristic of fitting into a pattern of actions all of which are completely harmonized with each other.

Of a man who advanced so that he only just falls short of perfect wisdom Chrysippus wrote:

He fulfills all appropriate actions in all respects and omits none; but his life is not yet in a state of well-being. This supervenes when these 'intermediate' actions acquire the additional property of firmness, consistency and their own proper co-ordination.

But most performers of appropriate acts will by no means fulfil all of them. Chrysippus' man is classified a sage with respect to what he does, still with respect to character he is judged as "foolish." (Precepts can lead to right actions if a man's character is compliant—they may tell one what but they do not tell how to live virtuously).

There are no degrees of goodness, though there are degrees of coming closer towards it. Until a man is good, he is bad according to the Stoics. A minute element of disharmony is sufficient to disqualify him. This is a hard demand and there is a big gap between theory and the practical achievement admitted by Chrysippus:

Wherefore on account of their extreme magnitude and beauty we seem to be stating things which are like fictions and not in accordance with man and human nature.

Stoic ethics are based on striving to achieve an ideal. The sage is not somebody who could be found in everyday life. He is an embodiment of perfection which mirrors the perfection of Nature. Judged by the standard of the sage we are all foolish or bad but through an effort and education the theory is that we can progress to a condition that approximates this perfection.

As a consequence of their concept of the sage the Stoics developed a radical political theory. In Zeno's *Republic* the fundamental Greek social and economic institutions are abolished. In the ideal world the state withers away because each Stoic sage is self-sufficient on his own authority, united with other men by the bond of true friendship.

DETERMINISM IN THE STOIC PHILOSOPHY AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY OF MAN

Philosophical Determinism

The interconnection between all the events and the things in the universe constitutes its determinism, i.e. the sequence between the causes and the effects. The Stoics believed that the universe operates in an orderly fashion and is intelligible, which means that if we knew all the preceding causes we would be able to predict future events. The ordered interweaving of causes and events the Stoics termed "fate" (*heimarmene*). Their concept of cause (*aitia*) was different from the Aristotelian one, the novelty consisting in the introduction

of a regularity, a law between cause and effect. Zeno identified this regularity with providence as corporeal intelligence (*logos*) in the cosmic fire (*pur technikon* or *pur noetikon*) located within the world and governing it. This theory reflected the theology of the soul of the universe developed by Plato. The soul appeared to be ordering and performing a providential function in the universe. The major difference from Plato's scheme was that in Zeno's system the order was to be periodically destroyed and renewed according to a cyclic rhythm. Chance (*teche*) was, for the Stoics, another word for a situation where the causes are not clearly visible, known or differentiated.

Among causes the Stoics differentiated between two sets: external causes attributed to the working of fate and internal causes related to the particular nature and linked to necessity (*ananke*). And determinism was the effect brought about jointly by these two types of causes:

For, they say since the nature of things and events are various and different ... what happens by the agency of any particular thing happens in accordance with its own specific nature. The behavior of a stone is in accordance with the nature of a stone, that of fire with the nature of fire, that of a living thing with the nature of the living thing. None of things that happen by the agency of a particular thing according to its nature can happen otherwise, but they all happen by necessity, though not from compulsion, since it is impossible for something whose nature it is to behave in one way, given that certain circumstances are invariant, to behave differently on some other occasion. If a stone is released from a height, it cannot fail to fall, because it contains weight in itself which is the cause of its natural movement. And when there are also external causes present which contribute to the stone's natural movement, stone by necessity is moved according to its nature ... The same principle applies also to other things. What holds for inanimate things also holds for living things, as they say. For living things possess a natural movement, and this is a movement in accordance with impulse (*horme*).

A more detailed description of the forces operating in the living creature was given by Origen:

For sentient creatures are moved from themselves when a presentation (*fantasia*) arises in them and calls forth impulse; moreover in some living creatures this occurs when the presentational nature of the creature prompts the impulse according to a fixed pattern, as in a spider the presentation of spinning occurs and the impulse follows until spinning results—its presentational nature calls forth this behavior in a prescribed manner and nothing else beyond the presentational nature is believed to belong to the animal—and in the bee the same process results in the making of wax. The rational animal, however, in addition to a presentational nature, has reason that judges (*krino*) the presentation, rejecting some and accepting others, in order that the animal may be guided in accordance with them.

These two examples illustrate how fate and necessity operate in Nature. Behavior thus operates and is determined by two sorts of causal laws—the external causes operating jointly with the intrinsic causes on the body fixed by its nature. Sentient creatures operate driven by impulse which is generated from sensory presentation. In some animals the transition is automatic, but in humans the impulse will be produced in a controlled manner due to the operation of the judging power—the reason (*logos*). Man is the only creature endowed with the capacity to understand cosmic events and to promote the rationality of Nature. He also is the only being that has the capacity to act in a manner that fails to accord with the operation of Nature (call it a Kantian freedom) and as such he is a moral agent. Man, as tools for his actions, has "impulses to virtue" or "seeds of knowledge" and this is sufficient to direct reason to the right direction.

Moral Responsibility

Since the Stoics considered the laws governing all things including human beings, to be universal, one may question therefore the responsibility of humans for what they do. If all things are directed by fate, and the course of fate cannot be changed, then the faults of men too ought to be considered a result of an unavoidable impulse that comes from fate. Thus, to many the Stoic determinism may seem to be incompatible with the practice of holding people accountable for their actions. The Stoics, however, did not compromise their stance on determinism in Nature and sought to show that it did not rule out moral responsibility for human conduct. They responded to the criticism and justified the use of moral and judicial concepts of praise, blame, responsibility and punishment.

The key element in the answer of the Stoics to their opponents was the assertion that reason sets humans apart from all other animals, and encompasses faculties which we call mental activities, such as judging, deciding, choosing, etc. Reason is subject to the inviolable laws that govern the rest of Nature and whatever happens happens in conformity with the laws of nature and given prevailing conditions.

Aristotle developed the concept of things which are "in our power" and which are "not in our power." The Stoics altered the sense of these two expressions into things which "are or are not attributable to us" (*ta eph' hemin* and *ta ouk eph' hemin*) and adapted it to their concepts of human nature and action:

If, they say, those things are attributable to us the opposites of which we are also capable, and in such cases praise and blame, encouragement and discouragement, rewards and punishments are given then wisdom and virtue (*arete*) cannot be attributable to those who have them, because they are no longer capable of receiving the vices (*kakiai*) opposed to their virtues; similarly, neither can vices be attributable to those who are vicious, since it is not attributable to them not (any longer) to be vicious. But it is absurd to deny that virtue and vice are attributable to us or that praise and blame are given for these. Therefore 'that which is attributable to us' does not have the same meaning

Argument follows from the assertion that virtues and vices, virtuous action and vicious actions are among the things that are attributable to humans and the detachment of this concept from the notion of capability or power. Virtues and vices are the mutually exclusive traits of character which determine conduct.

But, the formulation is not clear and Charlotte Stough, in her article, suggested three ways of interpretation of the assertion that the virtuous cannot be vicious and vice versa: 1. this "cannot" has a logical meaning—the virtuous cannot act viciously inasmuch as they are virtuous; 2. it is a moral "cannot" since those who are virtuous cannot, because their moral character will not permit it, act viciously and vice versa; 3. it is a natural "cannot" since those who are virtuous cannot become vicious and vice versa. The second interpretation becomes relevant for the Stoic assertion because that impossibility of the opposite action rests here on the moral ground of choice—certainly the virtuous can violate his moral principles if he chooses to do so, but he does not want to act unjustly thereby violating his moral principle. For a vicious person, the impossibility of action out of character does not mean that he is prohibited from virtuous action, but there is a certain sense of commitment to his goals. He could do so if he chose, but he does not want to perform actions which are deemed just. Thus, the possibility of a certain action is conditioned by the choice, the desires of a moral agent. And the denial of the opposite action is associated with some kind of stable or relatively permanent disposition to act in a specific way.

Stoics identified the moral dispositions of the human soul with its physical states and considered them to be relatively constant. But they could undergo change to the opposite state, thus inducing change in moral behavior. The morally relevant disposition that was not identical with virtue was termed vice and included also the state in which a vicious person wanted to improve his moral character. Virtue and vice were considered, by the Stoics, acquired dispositions of the soul. They are not innate and they are not determined exclusively by inherited nature. The innate potential develops into moral character which is shaped by training or neglect, and by corrupting influences. The Stoics pointed to the experience that the same bad men can become good, as evidence that virtue can be taught and moral progress made. The moral disposition can be also temporarily lost e.g. through melancholy or drunkenness.

It would seem that this view, that virtue and vice are not permanently fixed traits, does not fit well with Stoic determinism. But since the actions are determined by external and internal causes, moral improvement is not ruled out, even in this deterministic world of the Stoics.

Thus the first interpretation denies that a person can do what is logically impossible. The second that a person can or is willing to do what is incompatible with his moral principles or with his aims or purposes in acting. The third interpretation would have been rejected by the Stoics, because the individual would be totally helpless in his moral character inherited by his particular and fixed nature. He would be denied the capacity to act as a moral agent in accordance with choice.

However, the first two interpretations would deny that a person could be held accountable for his actions and

the term "things attributable to us" could not mean "those things the opposite of which we are capable," because the virtuous are not capable logically or morally of being vicious or vice versa. But, at the same time, virtue and vice are the things attributable to us and the moral agent is capable of opposite behavior if he chooses so.

The Stoics thus considered human beings as moral free agents and contrasted them with the Nature's inanimate and animate (plants and animals) beings. The "thing which is attributable to us" is restricted by human intelligence and is defined as "ability to act by impulse (*horme*) and assent (*sunkatathesis*)." The assent consists of such typically human faculties as formation of opinions, judgment, evaluation and learning (*pasa oun doxa kai krisis kai hupolepsis kai mathesis*). Thus, human action remains in contrast to events that just happen in nature with a regular consequence to causes, as prescribed (*tetagmos*) by fate. Humans, therefore, from the very nature of "things attributable to us" are responsible for their actions and things they do. But we cannot be held responsible for the things that befall us.

Chrysippus distinguishes two types of causes in order to avoid the imputation of necessity to fated events. All events in nature including human actions are fated but not necessitated by antecedent causes. These antecedent causes are auxiliary and proximate causes e.g. sensory stimuli are auxiliary and proximate causes. Though they are not in our power and not attributable to us, it does not follow that the impulse to action that results is not attributable to us. It would be so if the antecedent causes were "perfect and principal causes." This he asserted to undercut the undesirable consequence of the necessity of fate. Antecedent causes are linked to external causes and are both auxiliary and proximate causes. The perfect and principal causes correspond to internal causes, linked to the nature of the entities in question.

Chrysippus believed that the doctrine of the necessity of fated events had disastrous implications for human actions. He thought that a) if all events were determined by antecedent causes that were perfect and principal, human behavior would be necessitated by antecedent causes, and b) if human behavior were necessitated by antecedent causes, there would be no such thing as autonomous human action.

The distinction thus made by Chrysippus refutes the argument incorporating simplistic assumptions about things attributable to us. If the cause of a certain event is not attributable to us then the effect is not attributable to us. Chrysippus thus repudiates the argument with his distinction between "auxiliary and proximate causes" and "perfect and principal causes" to stop the inference.

This distinction is quite important: if auxiliary causes are necessary causes but not sufficient conditions of behavior and if they are equal to antecedent causes then the latter must be also necessary conditions for behavior. But the antecedent causes will not detract from the status of behavior as action, the type of natural event that is properly "attributable to us" as agents. This is so because the antecedent causes which are external causes of behavior are not the type of things that could be "attributable to us"; they are not a part of human nature nor do they belong to the sphere of things we do.

Auxiliary causes which are internal causes will also fall outside the domain of things we do. From the fact that the external causes of human behavior are not in the category of things attributable to us, given the fact that they are merely necessary conditions of behavior, we can draw no conclusion about the effect of these causes in particular, whether or not certain kinds of behavior can be attributable to us. On the other hand, if the antecedent causes were not only necessary, but also sufficient conditions of human behavior, such behavior could not, in principle, be attributable to mental acts, such as intentions, decisions, choices and the like, the terms that would fall under the Stoic definition of assent. Human behavior determined by external antecedent causes both necessary and sufficient could not be considered as "ours" at all.

So, on the secondary assumption that principal causes are to be understood as sufficient (or more likely necessary and sufficient) conditions of human behavior, Chrysippus would be justified in concluding that if the antecedent conditions determining such things as the impulse to behavior in human beings were "perfect and principal causes" there would be no such thing as human autonomy. Chrysippus' distinction between types of causes thus undermines the damaging application to human actions of the doctrine of the necessity of fated events.

Cicero explained the mechanism of the formation of assent in Stoic theory. External sensory stimulus causes an internal presentation in the agent. The sensory presentations, however, according to the Stoic

doctrine are not "attributable to us," i.e. they are not of human nature. They are merely necessary events or happenings internal to the agent. Events that are attributable to human beings are not an automatic consequence of sensory presentations! To issue an impulse sensory presentations require the assent of the person experiencing them. Chrysippus maintains that although assent cannot occur unless it is stimulated by a presentation, the sensory stimulus is an auxiliary not a principal cause.

If it is correct to distinguish between an external sensory stimulus and an internal presentation of sense, then the latter is an internal auxiliary cause. If, like other antecedent causes, they were not only necessary but also sufficient to explain human behavior, such behavior could not be considered action. "In the same way therefore, he says, as a person who has pushed a cylinder forward has given it a beginning of motion, but has not given it the capacity to roll, so a sense presentation when it impinges will it is the impress and as it were seal, its appearance on the mind, but the act of assent will be in our power (*in nostra potestate*), and as we said in the case of the cylinder, though given a push from without, as to the rest will move by its own force and nature."

Thus, human behavior, like the motion of a cylinder, requires a stimulus without which it cannot take place, and Chrysippus located this antecedent cause in sensory presentations. But the behavior of human beings, like the motion of the cylinder, cannot be understood without looking beyond (external) antecedent causes to the respective "natures" of those things.

Human nature, unlike that of a cylinder or anything else in nature, is characterized by the faculty of intelligent assent, (the faculty of reason, *logos* distinguishes the assent and behavior of human beings from that of other animals), so that the impulse to behavior that issues from assent in a human being will not be quite like that of any other part of Nature. It will be an impulse to behave that is distinctively human, the action by assent. Chrysippus believed that the act of assent is "attributable to us," i.e. it is in human nature. We may say that the faculty of assent gives human beings the capacity to act, as opposed to the capacity merely to move or perhaps to be moved as in the case of the cylinder. Intelligent assent therefore is a necessary feature of an action and distinguishes it from an event or happening. What a person does will depend on which presentations he assents to, and the assent given to sensory presentations will be a function of his own individual "nature," his own personality and character. A human agent, by virtue of giving his assent, makes the event that follows *his* action. In this case the talk about cause and action is not particularly illuminating in the context of moral discourse where it is often important to establish responsibility for actions. Thus responsibility is a realm typically human and pertains to human actions only.

To say that virtue and vice are attributable to us as persons is to say, in effect, that certain events in Nature are properly regarded as our actions and to that extent they are events that fall into the domain of moral discourse—events for which we as agents may be held responsible. To determine responsibility we must look for an agent or doer and that is not the same as looking for the customary causal explanation. There may be many causes of an occurrence, but if that occurrence is an action, none of these causal explanations can cancel the fact that it is the action of some person or persons. Clement of Alexandria described it in similar way. He says that many factors may combine to bring about a certain result, and although the end occurs because (*dia*) of all of them, not all are responsible for (*aitia*) what results. To be the *aitia*, the event of which something occurs must also be *poiethikon*, that is, productive of it. The notion of a cause as *poiethikon* comes very close to what we, in the case of persons, call an agent. Clement illustrated it with the case of Medea: Medea would not have killed her children if she had not been angry; she would not have been jealous had she not been in love; she would not have been in love if Jason had not sailed to Colchis, and so forth ... The end result of this chain, namely the slaughter of her children can be said to have occurred because of all these events but only Medea is *aitia*. The multiple reasons for the slaughter of Medea's children do not constitute competing explanations because they are not commensurate—they are different explanations answering different questions. We may ask: 1. Why did the event happen? 2. Who did it? (Whose action was it?) Only if there is an answer to question 2 we are likely to be dealing with an event that falls into the category of things attributable to us. The answer does not imply that the person in question may in fact be accountable but merely that questions of responsibility may be legitimately raised. The category of things "attributable to us" does not establish responsibility but rather distinguishes a domain of events within which moral responsibility is possible. The Stoic view of human nature and action is further elaborated by Origen. His point is a focus on capacity for movement of things in Nature. The Stoics differentiated human beings from all other natural things by a particular kind of movement unique to them. What distinguished those things from others that are moved from without is that they have a certain kind of cause (*aitia*) of motion in themselves. Things like plants and animals have internal cause of motion, "nature" and "soul";

inanimate objects must have an external agency to be moved along, they move by thrust of external force (*hupo exethen kinountos*). Plants and animals by virtue of having soul (and nature) are capable of self-movement. Origen adds that the Stoics also included in this group certain inanimate things—such as metals, fire, and perhaps streams which were held to move "out of themselves" (*hupo tinos metatithemena*), but these things are nevertheless contrasted with living things which move "from themselves" (*hupo tes enupargchouses fuseos _ psuches kinoumena*). In the case of animals sensory stimulation is a necessary condition of the impulse to self-movement. Those lacking intelligence move according to a prescribed pattern (*tetagmenos*). Human beings do not move in a set fashion—because the faculty of reason (*logos*) enables them to judge (*krino*) their sensory presentations—to reject or accept and to be guided. Origen calls this third kind of movement, self-movement of which only rational animals are capable, motion "through themselves" (*di'autou kineisthai*). Origen's account of the difference in motion (between humans and other animals) gives rise to morality.

He says "our nature as human beings furnishes the souls for considering the noble and the base and for judging between them. Even though we have no control over the fact that something external causes in us a presentation of this or that sort—the decision (*krisis*) to use this occurrence in one way or another is the function of nothing other than the reason within us."

We are deserving of praise when we choose the noble and avoid the base, but when we follow the opposite course we are blameworthy. Origen reasons: It is neither true nor reasonable to lay the blame on external things and release ourselves from the accusation making ourselves analogous to wood and stones inasmuch as they are drawn along by external things that move them; such is the argument of someone who wants to set up a counterfeit notion of autonomy (*autexousion*). For if we should ask him what autonomy is, he would say that it obtains "if there are no external causes, when I intend to do something in particular, that incite to the contrary." The Stoics believed that human beings are capable of self-movement without actually initiating their own motion. The beginning of motion of external objects, and self-movement, consists in the response of a sentient creature to those external causes. Moreover, it is clear that the faculty of reason, which informs assent to sensory presentation, makes the self-movement of human beings different in kind from that of any other living being.

That difference is crucial to the Stoic position and can be captured by contrasting the notion of action with mere movement. Applying the distinction between motion (event) and actions to the Origen text, we may understand him to say that it is the faculty of intelligent (*logikos*) assent that gives persons the capacity to act (autonomically) rather than merely move, or be moved, as wood and stones are moved. The *logos* qualifies the self-movement of human beings as action.

For the Stoics it is the *logos* that defines the notion of autonomous action and which (unlike the idea of cause) has logical ties to the concept of responsibility. There will be many forms of movement behavior in living things which, in the Stoic view, will not qualify as action and for which the question of moral responsibility will not therefore arise. It is an appropriate matter of concern only within the domain of behavior of living things capable of giving rational assent. And it is worth noting that not even all human behavior must count as action, according to the Stoic account. "A person can be moved against his will if he is pushed, for example, and he can move involuntarily if he falls, but he cannot act, cannot run without giving his intelligent assent. To misplace the responsibility for human actions on external events is to make ourselves analogous to wood and stones." It is a misconception of human nature to model it as an inanimate object, which is capable of nothing more than being moved. A similar argument against those who would deny that anything is attributable to us is also recorded by Origen. Anyone who claims that nothing is attributable to us is foolishly committed to the view that we are neither animals nor rational. The famous dog simile attributed to Zeno and Chrysippus, already mentioned illustrated the Stoic view of the relation between human action and fate. This example incorporates the Stoic view of human action and mental events attributable to us into the deterministic framework of their philosophy.

The special realm of human action is located by the Stoics within an all-encompassing Nature governed by causal laws. There is therefore an important sense in which our actions, the things we can do, are limited by Nature. We cannot change the laws of Nature including those of our own human nature (e.g. we cannot take actions to alter the course of the seasons). No sane person would attempt to accomplish the impossible. The madman, though he is "unwilling to follow," will be "compelled" by Nature in any case. But other limitations on what we can do are not so easy to discern. There are many actions that we can undertake which are

nevertheless regulated by our own individual natures, and it is in this region that the above quotation is especially relevant. For human beings can set out to do things that are impossible in fact for them to achieve, given their individual temperaments, talents, and capabilities.

These sorts of limitations, though rarely plain to the understanding, were no less binding for the Stoics. So by our self ignorance, we may show ourselves "unwilling to follow" and end by being "compelled" by the boundaries of our own natural capacities. The dog simile does not imply that our actions, whether undertaken out of wisdom or ignorance of Nature and the consequent success or failure of these undertakings, are not attributable to us.

The effort to bring ourselves into harmony with Nature, as well as the effort to resist, will result from mental acts that are attributable to us and so will qualify as actions for which we as agents may be held responsible.

Far from doing violence to such mental acts as choosing, deciding, deliberating and the like, the Stoic dog's simile actually reinforces the importance of these acts in determining responsibility. Nevertheless, any attempt to exceed the limitations that Nature has imposed on us, though preeminently our own and for which we are in principle responsible, will be deflected by the necessities of nature compelling us, in spite of ourselves, to yield to its power.

The same subtle relation between fate and human responsibility is implicit in the hymn to Zeus of Cleanthes quoted already.

The supreme importance that the Stoics placed on *logos* and the understanding of Nature can be most fully appreciated in this context. Understanding frees us from the compulsion of Nature. The person who understands the laws of external Nature as well as those of his own inner self will be able to approximate more closely the ideal human condition that the Stoics called freedom (*eleutheria*) and contrasted with slavery.

It is essential to recognize that although the concept of freedom is of singular importance in Stoic moral philosophy, it cannot be equated with their theory of responsibility. Both the ethical ideal of freedom as well as its opposed state of enslavement presuppose the concept of autonomous action. The Stoic ideal of freedom is often confused with the quite different concept of "freedom of the will." The early Stoics did not conflate the notion of what is attributable to us with that of freedom, but this distinction does become blurred later in the writings of Epictetus.

The man who is ignorant, and thus a slave to Nature and his passions, is no less an agent, a doer of actions, than the enlightened sage who is free. That part of our behavior that is "attributable to us" as persons, whether undertaken in a state of freedom or slavery, is just that part for which we are morally responsible.

The Stoics' claim that a person acts in accordance with his character is equally as bold as is the matter of character formation. The kind of person one is or will be is a product of both his own individual nature, which is inherited, and the environment external to him—including the persons he encounters and with whom he associates, especially in early years. These conditions are not in the sort of things to be within the range of choices that any individual can make. Human behavior is causally linked to many factors over which we as persons have little or no control. Many critics followed Aristotle's assertion claiming that if we are not responsible for the formation of our character we cannot justifiably be held responsible for actions determined by our character.

The Stoic account of human action and responsibility which differs markedly from the Aristotelian view, undermined this inference which considers a person's character as if it were a causal determinant in behavior, distinct from the person himself and operating independently of his purposes, wants, and desires.

Such a picture conjures up the image of an individual as prisoner of his character, itself fashioned independently of himself and his wishes by external forces to which he has fallen victim. There is nothing in the Stoic doctrine that would warrant such an extreme picture. What, then can be made of the view, apparently held by the Stoics, that a person is responsible for his actions, but not for his character?

Character in their account is shaped by inherited nature and environment and not by choice, with the implication presumably that human beings cannot be held accountable for that to which they have not given their assent.

The position that we are responsible for what we do, and not for what we are, can be made intelligible on the supposition that character is something over and above the things an individual actually does—the actions he actually performs—perhaps a set of dispositions to behave in such and such ways conceived independently of the actions he does in fact perform on any given occasion. Such a position is compatible with Stoic materialism, according to which mental dispositions are identical with physical states of the human soul.

Given that view of character, it might be argued that even though a dishonest person (for example) is surely blameworthy, it is for his dishonest dealings that we blame him and not because he has become a person of the sort to be inclined to act in those ways. For that he may very well be disliked, disapproved of, shunned, and perhaps even pitied, but not held accountable or blamed.

The common practice of holding persons accountable only for their actions is not, on the face of it, unreasonable even in the Stoic view of character formation. It clearly does not follow, from the proposition that a person is not responsible for his character in the above (Stoic) sense, that he cannot legitimately be held responsible for his actions.

CONCLUSION AND IMPACT OF THE STOIC ETHICAL THEORY

Among philosophers who were affected most, one has to mention Immanuel Kant. His "categorical imperative," as something "conceived as good in itself and consequently as being necessarily the principle of a will which of itself is confirmed to reason" corresponds to the Stoic "right reason."

The relation between the Stoics subjective content of a moral action and the Kantian objective necessity or universal law is obvious. But for Kant, welfare or happiness is not a constituent of moral goodness, whereas Stoic virtue constitutes something which is in the interests of man *par excellence*.

Another philosopher who was affected by the Stoics is Baruch Spinoza. His proposition is more deterministic than that of the Stoics: "in the nature of things nothing contingent is granted but all things are determined by the necessity of divine nature for existing and working in a certain way." Or "All ideas, in so far as they have reference to God [or nature] are true." But Spinoza renounced the conventional meanings of virtue and vice. He totally rejected the idea of any purpose that a person is designed to fulfil. Like the Stoics, he regarded happiness as wholly dependent upon understanding Nature and man's place in it.

He also stressed, as they did, the necessity of grasping the causes of man's passionate love and hatred of objects that have no relevance to happiness. But the "freedom" of mind, which such understanding can bring, is not a goal that Spinoza's Nature sets for man. Spinoza did not recognize any final causes.

Pleasure and prudence, not Nature's dispositions for man's active promotion of the world's well-being, are the motives which inspire man towards fortitude and nobility.

Stoicism, in the final analysis, defies any comparison with philosophical doctrine that was produced before or after it. It represents a supreme development of philosophical thought offering a naturalistic picture of the world and humans in it.