THE STOICS

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Chronological Table

Since Greek calendars did not coincide with ours some of these dates are slightly uncertain. For example, an event here assigned to 307 may have taken place in the earlier part of 306.

An asterisk distinguishes heads of the Stoic school at Athens.

Leading Stoics	*Important events*
	Death of Aristotle 322
*Zeno of Citium, born *c.* 333 came to Athens 312 died 262	Foundation of Peripatetic School by Theophrastus *c.* 317
Aristo of Chios	Polemo succeeds Xenocrates as head of the Academy 314
Persaeus of Citium at Corinth 243	Epicurus opens school in Athens 307
*Cleanthes of Assos, died 232	Arcesilaus head of the (Middle) Academy 268 (?) – 241
Sphaerus from the Bosporus at Sparta 235	
*Chrysippus of Soli, born *c.* 280 died *c.* 206	
*Zeno of Tarsus	Carneades revives scepticism in the (New) Academy
*Diogenes of Seleucia (Babylon), died *c.* 152	Carneades and Diogenes on embassy to Rome 155
*Antipater of Tarsus, died *c.* 130	Sack of Corinth by Mummius 146
Apollodorus of Seleucia	Carneades died 129
Archedemus of Tarsus	
Boethus of Sidon	
*Panaetius of Rhodes, born *c.* 185 associated with Scipio and his friends 138(?)–129 died *c.* 110	
Hecato of Rhodes	
*Mnesarchus *Dardanus } Joint heads	Antiochus of Ascalon borrows much from Stoicism (Fifth Academy)
	Sack of Athens by Sulla 86
Posidonius of Apamea, born *c.* 135, died *c.* 55	Cicero writes on philosophy, mainly in 45 and 44
Seneca the Younger, born AD 1 died AD 65	Augustus, Emperor 23 BC–AD 14
Musonius, banished AD 65 at Rome AD 89	Nero, Emperor AD 54–68
	Vespasian, Emperor AD 70–79
Epictetus, opens school at Nicopolis AD 89	
Hierocles	Hadrian, Emperor AD 117–138
Marcus Aurelius, born AD 121 Emperor AD 161–180	

Preface

STOICISM, a philosophical system which originated at the beginning of the third century BC, was an intellectual and social influence of prime importance for five centuries; after that its effects are evident in many Christian writers; and since the Renaissance its teaching has affected both philosophers and thoughtful men in search of a guide to life. In the late nineteenth century the German philosopher Dilthey wrote that it had been 'the strongest and most lasting influence that any philosophic ethic had been able to achieve'.

Not only the ethics of the Stoics but other parts also of their philosophy have been influential, as Dilthey himself did much to show. But it is for ethics that they have been best known and it is about their ethics that we are best informed; accordingly this book emphasises that aspect of their work. To trace their influence in later times is beyond my competence; I have attempted to write about them as they were and to sketch their position in the ancient world.

I have greatly profited from the generous help of several persons, for whose aid I am deeply grateful. My wife and my son made me understand some at least of the needs of readers without a classical background; Professor I.G. Kidd took much trouble over his helpful comments on the section which deals with Posidonius; Mr H.J. Easterling read the whole and offered valuable criticisms and suggestions. Finally Professor Moses Finley's acute and constructive scrutiny of the last draft did much to improve both accuracy and clarity. For faults and errors that remain and for any controversial opinions expressed the responsibility is entirely mine.

Cambridge, 1975 F.H.S.

In this reprint some additions have been made to bring the bibliography up to date.

Cambridge, 1988 F.H.S.

1

Introduction

In the ancient world of the Greeks and the Romans the words 'philosophy' and 'philosopher' carried different suggestions from those they have today. Literally they mean 'love of wisdom', 'lover of wisdom', and to understand anything at all may be part of wisdom. Therefore the ancient philosopher might venture into fields that are today occupied by specialists, astronomers, meteorologists, literary critics, social scientists and so on. To speak in general terms, they had an insufficient appreciation of the value of experiment and patient observation; a priori reasoning and inference from a few supposed facts were basis enough for explaining the subject in hand. To say this is not to condemn this 'philosophical' activity as useless. Many of its results were mistaken, like most of Aristotle's meteorology, but others were steps in the right direction, like Democritus' atomic theory. Intuitive guesswork has always been one of the methods by which knowledge has advanced. Too often, however, the ancients did not know how to test their guesses, or even that they needed testing.

The modern philosopher agrees with the ancient that ethics belongs to him. But there is a difference. C. D. Broad suggested that a study of ethics would do as little good to a man's conduct as a study of dynamics would to his performance on the golf-links (*Five Types of Ethical Theory* p. 285). Not all philosophers of today would hold such an extreme position, but it is the opposite of that which was all but universal in the ancient world. We study ethics, said Aristotle, not in order to know what goodness is but in order to become good (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1103 b.27). The ancient philosopher, unless he was a sceptic and on principle refused to commit himself, was convinced that ethics had practical consequences; he also held that whatever other subjects he might study, this was the one of first importance. No wisdom could have a higher value than a knowledge of how to live and behave. Some thinkers may have found a more attractive challenge in non-ethical problems, but none could leave

ethics aside, the more so because Greek religion, and even more Roman, failed to give adequate guidance. It was largely a matter of ritual, and although not devoid of moral influence, did not offer any coherent set of reasons for the behaviour it encouraged. If any one person can be credited with being the cause of this primacy of ethics, it is Socrates, an Athenian of the later fifth century BC, who exerted a fascination on following generations that is not exhausted even today. He left no writings, but his memory was preserved in the dialogues composed by those who had known him and who made him a character in their works. The figure that appears is of a man who was overwhelmingly interested in discovering the key to right conduct, who by questioning those whom he met forced them to recognise the inadequacy and inconsistency of their thinking on morality, and who hoped to find the answer to his problems by defining the terms of ethical vocabulary, virtue, bravery, justice, and so on. He believed that if one could only know what is good, one could not help but do it; no one was willingly bad, and badness was the result of not knowing what was good. He did not himself claim to have this knowledge; he was only a lover of wisdom (*philosophos*), not a wise man (*sophos*). But he attracted a number of younger men who found intellectual excitement in hearing him discuss, or discussing with him, these problems. Their attachment was increased when in 399 BC he was prosecuted and condemned to death on a charge of 'not recognising the gods recognised by the state, introducing new divinities, and corrupting the young'. The prosecutors no doubt thought that the stability of society was threatened by his influence, which encouraged young men to question traditional assumptions; several of his friends had emphasised the faults of democracy as practised at Athens, and among them the brilliant Critias had in particular excited hatred as leader of the 'Thirty Tyrants', dictators who after Athens' defeat in the Peloponnesian War had with Spartan aid seized power and bloodily maintained it for more than a year.

Socrates' death turned him into a martyr, and far from checking his influence made it grow. Many of his younger friends tried to continue his work and attracted to themselves others who had intellectual interests or a desire to find a rule for life. A large literature came into existence, which represented him

as the writers would have had him be. The most important works were the dialogues of Plato, where Socrates is made to carry his spirit of inquiry into subjects, above all psychology and metaphysics, which had never occupied him, and to express views that became more and more positive as time went on. It was probably about 388 that Plato established the body that came to be known as the Academy, because it occupied buildings near the exercise-ground of that name. This was constituted as an association for the worship of the Muses and its members, although no doubt in sympathy with Plato, were independent and sometimes critical of him. Aristotle was among those who worked there; he came as a youth from Macedonia in 367, by no means the only recruit from abroad, and remained until Plato's death twenty years later. He then went to Asia Minor and Macedonia, returning to Athens for the period 335 or 334 to 323 or 322, during which he did some teaching in the Lyceum, another place of exercise.

Meanwhile the Academy flourished under the leadership first of Plato's nephew Speusippus and then of Xenocrates. All the principal figures in it were men of means who could freely devote themselves to philosophical, mathematical, and scientific pursuits, and the young men who came to their lectures or classes were no doubt the sons of well-to-do fathers. Very different was another line of descent from Socrates, who had been a comparatively poor man; his clothes were old and he usually went barefoot. This aspect appealed to Antisthenes, who maintained that wealth and poverty were to be found in the soul not in the purse, and that his own lack of material possessions gave him freedom. He was a copious writer of works, now entirely lost, on a variety of subjects; Aristotle scornfully mentions some of his views on logic. But historically he is important because his writings later stimulated Diogenes, the first of the Cynics, to preach the ascetic manner of life as 'natural' and the way to freedom. Outside Athens Socrates' influence went on in various places, most importantly in Megara, where there was a school of which little is known except that it did important work in logic. Academics, Cynics, and Megarians were all to have their influence on Stoicism.

In the fourth century a young man could choose between two forms of higher education, either rhetoric, that is to say training

in the methods of persuasive speech, or philosophy, which was a subject of uncertain scope, depending on the interests of the philosopher to whom he attached himself. But in the Academy it was divided into logic, 'physics' or the study of the physical world, and ethics, which was regarded not as a theoretical subject but one which would have a practical result in right action. The Latin dramatist Terence, translating a play by the Athenian Menander written about the end of the fourth century, makes a father say that 'pretty well all young men have some pursuit: they keep horses or hounds for hunting or go to philosophers . . . my son did all these things in a quiet way' (*Andria* 55–7). There was doubtless a large number of men with time on their hands, and many of them will have sampled what philosophers had to offer.

This was the situation when at the end of the fourth century Zeno formed the system of thought that we know as Stoicism. His primary concern was to establish principles to govern conduct; not merely to lay them down, but to show they were right. This involved him and perhaps still more his immediate successors, Cleanthes and Chrysippus, in other subjects which we are inclined to regard as independent and to pursue for their own sakes. The question of right conduct could not be settled without understanding the relation of man to the universe. Seeing him as a single cell, as it were, in a great being with its own life, these Stoics had to attempt to give an account of the processes of that life. Then it was necessary to show that man could have knowledge of the physical world in which he found himself, and how he could correctly develop by reasoning the primary information he obtained. Such questions, in themselves purely intellectual, were embarked on as unavoidable if moral principles were to be securely laid down, but they could in practice be pursued for their own sake.

There is a parallel here with the system of Zeno's slightly older contemporary Epicurus. For him also the centre of philosophy was the question of how one should act. He believed that the only proper object was one's own pleasure, most surely to be attained by a retired and simple life; the greatest obstacles to a pleasant life were anxieties caused by a belief in life after death and that the gods organised or interfered with the running of the world. This led him to give an elaborate account of physical

things, their origin and decay, to argue that all that happens is due to mechanical causes and that death must destroy the soul that gave the body its life. One has the impression that he often took a purely intellectual pleasure in such arguments, and that their ethical bearing was not always prominent in his mind. Similarly with the Stoics, one may suspect that Chrysippus, for example, pursued his investigations into logic because he found them interesting rather than because they were necessary for ethics.

There were men who called themselves Stoics for more than five hundred years. Such a time could not pass without changes. It is unfortunate that the nature of our sources, shortly to be described, does not allow more than a rough account of them.

Of Chrysippus, who worked in the latter half of the third century, it was said that 'if there had been no Chrysippus, there would have been no Stoa'. He seems to have restated, expanded, and to some extent modified the views of Zeno, to have drawn out and accepted even their paradoxical implications, and to have established what can be called an orthodoxy. His successors in the next half-century were mainly concerned to defend this orthodoxy against the attacks of Carneades. The Academy, of which he was head, had already before the time of Chrysippus adopted the sceptical position that nothing could be known, that is known to be certainly true. Carneades was ready to attack any doctrine advanced by other philosophers, but his criticisms fastened particularly on the Stoics. They tried to evade the difficulties by re-phrasing rather than by any real change of meaning. The very fragmentary information that survives about these men suggests that they took a greater practical interest than the more theoretical Chrysippus had done in the kind of problems that arose for decision in real life.

That was certainly true of Panaetius, who was active in the latter part of the second century. What concerned him was not the ideal sage, but the real actual human being in all his variety. He was prepared to re-think and re-fashion his philosophy, taking into account some of the views of Plato and Aristotle, for both of whom he had a high regard. So had his pupil Posidonius, who stands out as a unique figure among the Stoics for the breadth of his studies, which included geography, anthropology,

and history, and for his unwavering determination to see knowledge as an integrated whole.

The intellectual energy of Panaetius and Posidonius had no imitators. But in their time and very much through the influence of the former, Stoicism was introduced to the Romans, among whom it was to have its greatest success. At first it had to compete with Epicureanism, and there were intellectuals who were attracted by the suspension of judgment recommended by the Academy. But the Romans tended to be active practical men; many of Cicero's Epicurean contemporaries disregarded their founder's preference for a retired life and his distrust of politics; Cicero himself, professedly an Academic, was deeply affected by Stoicism, being allowed by his sceptical principles to accept views as probable, although they could not be certain. By the end of the first century BC Stoicism was without doubt the predominant philosophy among the Romans, and references to Stoic doctrines, hostile or favourable, are common in Latin literature. There were soon to be Stoic poets, Manilius with his didactic poem on astrology, Persius with his crabbed satires, Lucan with his epic on the civil wars. Although Virgil was an Epicurean as a young man, without Stoicism his *Aeneid* could not have taken the form it has. The Roman lawyers too were powerfully affected, deriving from Stoicism the concept of a law of nature, the product of reason, to agree with which human laws should be adapted.

This influential position was won because Stoicism, while possessing an organised system of thought to support its doctrines, advanced some ideas which met current needs. The belief that the world was entirely ruled by Providence would have an appeal to the ruling class of a ruling people; but it was also a comfort to those for whom things went wrong. To accept misfortune without resentment as something divinely ordered led to ease of mind. Then a man who could rid himself of fear, of cupidity, of anger, as this philosophy commanded, had escaped much cause of unhappiness. It was possible also to derive from it much in the way of practical moral precept. Such aspects seem to have been emphasised at Rome.

In the Greek world of the first two centuries of our era Stoicism clearly remained a lively influence. But this is known more from the controversial writing of opponents like Plutarch,

Galen, and Sextus Empiricus, who undoubtedly have a living tradition in view, than from any information about personalities. Those who are named remain shadowy figures, and there is no evidence that an organised school continued in Athens after the sack of that town by Sulla in 86 BC. But it will hardly be wrong to suppose that alongside a concern for practical morality there persisted an interest in its theoretical justification and in the problems of logic and of the natural world; many of the writings of Chrysippus and his successors of the second century were still available and studied.

But the Stoics of this time whose names are familiar all learned their Stoicism in Rome. Seneca was, however, the only one who wrote in Latin. The oral teaching of Musonius and Epictetus is reported in Greek, and that was certainly the language used by the latter, probably that of the former too. Marcus Aurelius also wrote his *Meditations* in Greek. Greek had for centuries been the language of philosophy, for which Latin was an inferior vehicle, being less flexible and lacking a technical vocabulary. Many educated Romans understood Greek, and so Greek teachers of philosophy had no incentive to master a foreign language.

It is these authors from the Roman world who survive to represent Stoic literature. Although they are one-sided, their personalities come out strongly in their books and secured them many readers until recent times. Very different from one another, they share a common outlook. They have a minimal interest in anything but ethics and see in Stoic philosophy an established system of beliefs that could guide, comfort, and support a man in the difficulties and dangers of life. They are preachers of a religion, not humble inquirers after truth. It was not unusual at Rome for a wealthy family to keep a philosopher, much as great families in England used to keep a chaplain. The philosopher is often called the 'doctor of the soul', and to Seneca he is the 'paedagogus' of the human race, that is the servant who supervised the behaviour of the growing child.

The third century AD brought a sudden decline. The peaceful and prosperous age of the Antonines was succeeded by turmoil, civil war, and a growingly restrictive form of society. New religions, and for the philosophically inclined a revived Platonism, offered the consolations of life after death for the miseries, hard

to approve, of this world. But although professed Stoics became few, Stoicism continued to exert its influence. In particular it provided a great deal of material to those members of the Christian church who wished to build up an intellectual structure on their faith. They might absorb it, alter it, or refute it; but in any case they were in part moulded by it.

A difficulty faces anyone who writes about the Stoics: not a single work remains extant that was written by any one of them during the first three hundred years after the foundation of the school. Of Zeno there are two brief quotations which are certainly verbatim and half a dozen more which may be. Of Cleanthes, his successor, there is a little more and more still of Chrysippus, but scraps only, isolated from their contexts. For all three, as for all the Stoics before Panaetius, we depend on information provided by later writers, whether followers or opponents or historians (if they deserve the name) of philosophy. The last were concerned to give in a desiccated form the main outlines of the systems they described, sometimes citing one or more Stoics as authorities for a doctrine, occasionally recording a divergence between their witnesses. Of these writers the most important is Diogenes Laertius, now put in the second century AD. There is part of a rather better work by Arius Didymus, who was a court philosopher to the Emperor Augustus. Aetius' handbook, *Opinions of the Philosophers*, must be used with caution.

The chief of the opponents is Plutarch, who writing before and after the turn of the first century AD provides much information. A confirmed and unsympathetic critic of the Stoics, he was well-informed and did not intend to misrepresent the views he attacked. In the early half of the second century the sceptic Sextus Empiricus made it his practice to expound the doctrines he intended to criticise. Later in the same century the physician Galen, well-read and verbose, found occasion for attacking Chrysippus' psychology at length and supporting that of Posidonius; here and there he provides other pieces of information.

Unique among the non-Stoic authorities is Cicero, who tried to give Greek philosophy a Latin dress to recommend it to Roman readers. Writing very rapidly, not always with full understanding of his models, and using a language which lacked an established philosophical vocabulary, he translated, paraphrased, abbreviated, and expanded Greek authors. Although

this led to some distortion, he is indispensable not only because he provides the earliest evidence about the Stoics but also because he writes with verve and feeling, preserving an element lost in cold summaries. His work *On Duties* was based on Panaetius and *On the Nature of the Gods* makes some use of Posidonius, whom he knew personally, but for the most part he seems to be following orthodox sources, as in *On Fate* and the third book of *Goals of Life* (*De Finibus*).

From these varied witnesses one can reconstruct in outline a system which can be called orthodox Stoicism. The main lines were no doubt laid down by Zeno, but Chrysippus filled them out, and some of the details may have been added by later authors. Some points can be recognised over which Chrysippus disagreed with Zeno; they are noticed by our authorities. It is a temptation, but a mistake, for the historian of thought to discover more divergencies; information is too uncertain and inadequate to allow us to find differences that were not noted in antiquity. For the most part Chrysippus was probably expanding and developing rather than altering the doctrines of the founder; his reported saying 'Give me the views and I'll find the arguments' was not a claim to great originality.

The system having been explained, the subsequent chapters of this book consider how later Stoics modified it and selected from it. Many of them are more accessible to us than the earlier thinkers. Their works survive in whole or in part; more is known of their lives and more of the society and circumstances in which they lived. The early Stoics had intended their philosophy to form a guide to life, but the very nature of the evidence makes them appear as theoreticians. Many of the later Stoics were practical men of action and one can see the relevance of their beliefs to their doings. Even those who were primarily teachers were mainly concerned with the practical problems of life which faced them and their pupils.

2

The Founder

AT the north-west corner of the agora, the great central square of Athens, stood the Stoa Poikile or Painted Colonnade, so called from the mural paintings by Polygnotus and other great artists of the fifth century BC that adorned it. Here, in the early part of the third century BC, could often be seen a seated figure talking to a group of listeners; his name was Zeno and his followers, first called Zenonians, were later described as 'men from the Stoa' or 'Stoics'.

Zeno was not an Athenian, but the son of a merchant, Mnaseas, from Citium in Cyprus. Mnaseas, although a good Greek name, was one sometimes adopted by Phoenicians, and Citium, once a Greek colony, was now predominantly Phoenician in language, in institutions, and perhaps in population. Zeno's contemporaries who called him a Phoenician may have been justified in so doing, but he must be imagined as growing up in an environment where Greek was important. His father is said to have brought home from Athens many 'Socratic books', which fired the young man's imagination. Anecdotes of this kind were often invented in antiquity and must always be treated with some reserve, but this one at least has a certain plausibility, and may have been recorded by his pupil Persaeus, with whom he at one time shared a house

It was as a youth of 22 (Persaeus was the authority for this) that Zeno came to Athens in the year 312 or 311 BC. There is an anecdote that he sat down by a bookseller, who was reading aloud from Book II of Xenophon's *Reminiscences of Socrates* (*Memorabilia*): he asked where men of that kind were to be found; at that moment Crates the Cynic happened to pass by, and the bookseller replied 'Follow that man'. The story may be merely ben trovato, but there is no doubt that in his early years Zeno did come under Crates' influence, and his first book, the Republic, was said to have been written when he was 'backing up the dog'. 'Cynic' means 'canine', and the first dog had been Diogenes, who was given that nickname because of

his shameless behaviour, and who accepted it as being the watch-dog of morality. He was dead before Zeno came to Athens and Crates was the most gifted of his followers. Cynicism was hardly a philosophy; it was more an attitude and a way of life. Diogenes, who had been reduced from affluence to poverty, found a guiding light, as has been said, in the writings of Antisthenes. Right thinking, virtue, and happiness were an indissoluble trio, and material possessions irrelevant. Diogenes tried to show their unimportance by sleeping rough, relying on charity for his food, and having no clothes but a cloak. One of his cries was 'Deface the currency', that is put out of circulation the artificial coinage that passes as valuable:[1] and rules and customs that govern our behaviour in society are nothing but a bondage to be shaken off; we should live as nature commands.

The Cynics had some admirable or at any rate attractive doctrines. To be good is all that matters; to be good brings happiness; to be wise, that is to know how to act, makes one good; one ought to live naturally, and freely. But these are isolated principles rather than a philosophic system; and they assume that anyone can see what constitutes goodness and what a natural life is. 'Virtue', Antisthenes had said, 'is not a thing that needs a lot of talk', and when asked what was the most necessary branch of learning, he had replied 'to unlearn your vices'. Although strongly affected by the Cynic outlook, Zeno could not remain satisfied with it and after a time he became a pupil of Polemo, a man of no great originality, who had succeeded Xenocrates as head of the Academy, the leading philosophical school of the day; here he will have got to know something of Plato's views, as modified, developed, and organised by the master's successors. This is the influence recognised by the scholars of antiquity, and this is the first place to look for the sources of Zeno's thought.

Many modern writers try to find a connexion with Aristotle, but this I believe to be a mistake, due to the tempting supposition that he loomed as large to the generation that succeeded him as he does to us. There is much to suggest that those works

[1]This interpretation is supported by Dio Chrysostom 31.24, Julian *Orations* 7.211c; see also C. T. Seltman, *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, cxlii (1929) 7.

of his that are read today, works mostly not prepared for publication, sometimes barely intelligible notes, were for the most part not known until they were edited in the first century BC. There may have been private copies of some made for pupils, but they do not in general seem to have been in the book-trade or to have been part of what philosophers might be expected to read. The only books of his mentioned by early Stoics are two published works, now lost, the *Protrepticus* (*A Call to Philosophy*) and *On Justice*. It is certain that some of his ideas were accepted and used by his pupil Theophrastus, who founded the so-called Peripatetic school shortly before Zeno's arrival in Athens; but although some knowledge of the unpublished Aristotelian doctrine may have thus reached Zeno at second-hand, there is no hint in the ancient sources that the Stoic ever listened to the Peripatetic. The foregoing sentences can give but a partial and inadequate account of the problem, but they must serve to explain why this book leaves Aristotle almost entirely out of account. It is often said that the Stoics 'rejected' this or that characteristically Aristotelian doctrine: it is better to say that they ignored it.

Zeno is reputed to have listened also to Diodorus 'Cronus' and to Stilpo, leader of the 'Megarian school', who were greatly interested in logical puzzles and the invention of arguments that seemed to lead to paradoxical conclusions. It was, however, probably not this that attracted Zeno, who later found the principal merit of logic in its ability to show the falsity of such constructions, but rather Stilpo's moral teaching, which was not unlike that of the Cynics. He saw the wise man as entirely self-sufficient, needing no friends, quite independent of external possessions: no one could take from him his wisdom, and he was unaffected by the misfortunes that other men would count as evils. It is uncertain when Zeno began to talk in the Stoa or how soon his teaching had taken a form to which the name of Stoicism can properly be given. There was no formal foundation of a school, and the Stoics, unlike the other three groups, Academy, Peripatetics, and Epicureans, had no common property or legal status. One may imagine a gradual process of growth, as Zeno developed his ideas and drew to himself an increasing number of hearers, many from overseas.

The Stoa was a public place where foreigners were as welcome as citizens. But he had Athenians among his audience too. When he died in 262 the assembly passed a resolution to honour him by a tomb and by setting up inscriptions in the exercise grounds of the Academy and the Lyceum, places of education as well as sport. The decree opens with the following words:

> Since Zeno of Citium, son of Mnaseas, has spent many years in the city engaged in philosophy, and in every way has always shown himself a good man, and in particular by exhorting to virtue and good behaviour the young men who came to associate with him has stimulated them to the best of conduct, exhibiting as an example to all his own way of life, which followed what he said in his talk, therefore it has seemed good to the people to praise Zeno of Citium, son of Mnaseas, and to crown him with a golden garland, etc.

This testimonial need not be entirely disbelieved, even although the decree was proposed by one Thraso, the agent at Athens of Antigonus Gonatas, King of Macedon, who was an admirer of Zeno's, had visited him in Athens, and vainly invited him to his court. A few months before Zeno's death Athens had surrendered to Antigonus, starved out by a long siege; and the political independence, for which she had struggled ever since the defeat of Chaeronea (336 BC), had gone, never to be recovered. Stoicism is sometimes represented as a philosophy devised to form a refuge for men disorientated by the collapse of the system of city-states, 'a shelter from the storm'. This is based on a misapprehension. The city-state had never given security, and it remained the standard primary form of social organisation even after military power had passed into the hands of the great monarchies. As a corrective one may quote the words of C. Bradford Welles :

> It is fantasy and perversion to see in Stoicism a new personal doctrine invented to sustain the Greeks in a cityless world of great Empires, for Hellenism was a world of cities, and Hellenistic Greeks were making money, not worrying about their souls. (*Greece and Rome*, 1965, 227.)

At Athens political life continued active and often bloody during almost the whole of Zeno's time. What is true is that during the fifty years following the death of Alexander the Great many Greeks left their own cities hoping, it may be presumed, to find a better life elsewhere. Many went to the new lands of Asia. Men who were looking for a wider cultural life than their own towns could provide would be attracted to Athens. Almost all of Zeno's followers whose origins are known were of this sort; they were people who, like him, had abandoned what rights and duties they may have had in their own cities, preferring the disadvantages of life as aliens, second-class residents, legally, politically, and socially deprived, but enjoying the stimulus of an intellectual ambience.

Some scholars have seen in the real or supposed Semitic origin of several prominent Stoics, in particular of Zeno and Chrysippus, an influence on the development of their thought. It is safer to leave this out of account. Little is known about the intellectual or religious climate in which they grew up, since it cannot have been uniform in all Semitic communities; the Jews and the Carthaginians may have had something in common, but the differences were greater. Nor is it necessary to look for some factor outside Greece : Stoicism can be adequately explained as a natural development of ideas current among the Greeks.

Zeno's first book, now lost like all his other works, was concerned with the structure of society. There has been much dispute about the intention of his Republic, and I give the interpretation that seems to me best to suit the evidence. It laid down how men ought to live together. Only the wise, that is those who think right and therefore act right, do what they ought. Therefore he described a society of the wise, in a sense an ideal society, but not necessarily one that he regarded as impracticable. The proposals were 'relevant to his own place and time' (Philodemus, *Against the Stoics,* xviii). He may have had a young man's optimism about the prospects of reform. Nor need he have supposed that social change must wait until all men were wise: his proposals might be practicable if they were accepted by a large majority in any one place.

To entitle his book *Politeia* (*Republic* or *Political State*) was a paradox, because he swept away everything that the Greeks

regarded as characteristic of the *polis* or organised society. There were to be no temples, no law-courts, no 'gymnasia', no money. Wise men are friends, and friends according to the Greek proverb, share their possessions; in a commune of friends there will be no more need for cash-transactions than inside a family. Gymnasia, not only exercise-places, but also the scene of 'higher education', were an aid to political life, which was also prosecuted in the courts of law; political struggles and legal framework have no value for men who know how to live together. Temples and statues of gods were the visible symbols of national unity; but the wise man will set no store by them, having a lofty contempt for the products of the manual workers' hands. Plutarch wrote (*Moralia* 329 A) that Zeno's *Politeia* can be summarised as saying that 'we should not live organised in cities or in demes,[1] each group distinguished by its own views of right, but should think all men our fellow-demesmen and fellow citizens, and that there should be one way of life and one order, like that of a flock grazing together on a common pasture' (or 'under a common law'). The word *nomos* used in the Greek can mean either 'pasture' or 'law', but even if the latter interpretation is correct, the intention was not that there should be any organised world state, but that wherever men came together they should be governed by the rule of reason, which would be the same the world over. Other reports represent Zeno as speaking of what should be done in cities; he must have meant thereby not 'political' cities, but 'physical' cities, groups of men living in the same place.

Opponents of Stoicism were to make play with Zeno's proposals in this book with regard to sex. He is said to have favoured 'community of wives' or that 'any man should lie with any woman'. This was later accepted and defended by Chrysippus, the third head of the school, who explained that the children would be cared for by their elders in general and that incest was not unnatural, being common among animals. It is likely enough that Zeno had advanced the same considerations. But his reasons for advocating this sexual permissiveness, which extended to homosexual acts, are less certain. Chrysippus was

[1]A deme was a subdivision of a city, with many important functions in society.

to say that community of wives would avert the jealousy caused by adultery; but a society of wise men would be in no danger of feeling jealousy. More probably Zeno took over the attitude of the Cynic Diogenes, who had in his *Republic* gone even further, approving all forms of coition. This had been part of his campaign to return to nature and cast off the conventions with which man had impeded himself. But to Zeno it may have seemed that in a society of wise men and wise women monogamy would serve no purpose. In actual societies marriage usually provided a home where children could be brought up, while husband and wife were a mutually supporting pair. Among the wise, however, charity would not begin at home: there benevolence would extend equally to all the human race; there would therefore be no need for the particular protection afforded by the household. In the real world in which the Stoics lived the situation was different, and marriage and the rearing of children came to be approved. Even a wise man, if there were one, some were to say, would see it as right to marry.

Of Zeno's later works little is known but the titles. These include *On the Universe, On Substance, On Vision,* but predominantly they suggest a concern with human behaviour, e.g. *On Life that accords with Nature, On Impulse, On Human Nature, On Passions, On Appropriate Action, On Law, On Greek Education.* He also wrote five books of *Homeric Problems* as well as about Hesiod's *Theogony,* no doubt accepting the popular view that the poets were teachers whose views were to be discovered by interpretation. At times he would rewrite verses if he disapproved their sentiment; for example he amended Sophocles' lines

> 'Who traffics with a tyrant is his slave,
> Although he comes as free'

by writing '——is no slave, Given he comes as free'. He is also the central figure of many anecdotes, which testify to his being a man who caught people's attention. Several show him as putting down presumptuous young men. To a talkative youth he said, 'We have one tongue and two ears to listen twice as much as we speak'. Such reproof and even more biting ones earned him a reputation for harsh severity alongside the re-

spect that was paid to his self-control and simple manner of life.

By his oral teaching and in his written works Zeno must have laid down the outlines of the system we call Stoicism. But it is impossible to draw a firm line between his contribution and those of his successors. All that can be done in a book of this size, at least, is to give an account of orthodox Stoicism, with some reference, where the sources allow, to the founder or to other individual members of the school.

3

The System: Ethics

Central to the Stoic system of ethics was the view that what was morally perfect, virtue (*aretê* in the narrow sense of the word[1]) and acts and persons that were virtuous, belonged to a class of its own, incomparable with anything else; that to be virtuous was the same as to be happy; that 'good' (*agathon*) was an absolute term applicable only to moral perfection. This alone always had effects of which a wise man would approve: everything else which ordinary speech called good, e.g. wealth, health, intelligence, might be used for bad purposes, to commit wicked acts. Virtue, too, was an absolute term: it was a state such that its possessor would always do what was right,[2] and this was possible only if he always knew what was right: hence the virtuous man must be a wise man, and virtuous because he was wise. By a symmetrical process of reasoning the word 'bad' (*kakon*) must be restricted to what was morally imperfect, and most of the things that were in ordinary speech called 'bad', e.g. death, ill-repute, and ugliness, should not be given that name, since they did not necessarily lead to wickedness, but might be the material for virtuous action. All such things like those that were popularly called 'good' were *per se* morally indifferent (*adiaphora*).

[1] *Aretê*, conventionally translated 'virtue,' had a wider sense, more like 'excellence'. But, as used by the Stoics and often by philosophers contemporary with them, it denoted what we may call moral excellence, with the proviso that it included an intellectual element of understanding or knowledge. Hence the possessor of virtue, the good man, is also a 'wise man'. It was then assumed that other forms of excellence need not be taken into account: this moral excellence and human excellence were treated as identical.

[2] There was a dispute whether virtue, once acquired, could be lost again. Cleanthes said no, Chrysippus more cautiously said that intoxication or madness might cause its loss. The question is not worth recording except as an example of the unprofitable speculation into which philosophers could be led.

Goodness, however, and knowledge, although they had value of a unique kind, could not be the only things to have value. Right action was a matter of choice concerned with morally indifferent things—will you look for wealth or accept poverty, marry or remain a bachelor, live or die?—and choice between absolutely indifferent alternatives would not involve knowledge or reason. A man who says that goodness is knowledge may be asked: knowledge of what? If he answers that it is knowledge of goodness, the reply is unilluminating and involves an eternal regress. Zeno escaped from this by recognising that things morally indifferent were yet not without degrees of value or its opposite. He said that just as at a court the king was in a class of his own, *sui generis,* but the courtiers had their ranks of precedence, so the good was unique, but among things morally indifferent some were preferred to others. In general health, wealth, and beauty, would be preferred by a sensible man, if he had the choice, rather than sickness, poverty, or ugliness. Virtue can then consist in the effort to obtain these things that have value and to avoid their contraries, and knowledge can be knowledge of what is to be preferred. But since things of this sort are not good or bad, it is of no importance whether one has them or does not have them, so far as goodness is concerned. The good intention is enough; achievement may be impeded by forces outside a man's control.

Zeno held moreover that virtue or goodness was the sole cause of *eudaimonia* or happiness: the reasons for this opinion will be discussed later; but if it is accepted, there is a striking result: happiness is not in any way forwarded by possession of things that, although preferable, are morally indifferent. Nor is it in any way spoiled if one is saddled with their opposites, for they do not prevent one from being morally good, and that is the only way to be happy. Throughout the history of Stoicism this is a key-point and one perhaps of increasing importance. A man's excellence or virtue—the Greek word *aretê* covers both—does not depend on his success in obtaining anything in the external world, it depends entirely on his having the right mental attitude towards those things. The external world should not be a matter of indifference to him, and he is bound to recognise differences of value in it, but they are not values that contribute to his excellence and his happiness, of which he is the

sole arbiter. The self-confidence and self-reliance which this belief gave to the Stoic were of immense help to many men in facing the dangers and misfortunes of life. Whether the belief is justifiable, is another question. And even for the Stoics there were difficulties in associating it with other beliefs that they held. This will appear later, on further inspection of the ideas involved.

For the moment it is enough to see how they insisted upon the cleft between the morally good and the morally indifferent, and between the values that attached to the two classes. The contrast was marked by a vocabulary which was carefully maintained. The morally good was 'to be won' (*haireton*), the morally bad 'to be fled from' (*pheukton*), the indifferent was either 'to be taken' (*lêpton*) or 'picked' (*eklekteon*) or 'not to be taken' (*alêpton*). It is imposible to find a set of English adjectives that will correctly represent the Greek words. I shall use 'acceptable' and 'chosen' of the indifferent things that have value; but it must be remembered that choice does not imply that one is committed to getting what is chosen. One should mind only about what is good, i.e. morally good. The foregoing words signify the correct attitude towards the two classes; another set represents their effects. The morally good is 'beneficial' (*ôphelimon*) or 'useful' (*chrêsimon*), the bad 'harmful' (*blaberon*), indifferent things are either 'serviceable' (*euchrêsta*) or 'unserviceable' (*dyschrêsta*). The two kinds of value, that of the morally good and that of the indifferent, are incomparable. One might find a parallel in the difference between counters, which have a value for a game, and money, which has a value for buying groceries. Indifferent things have a value for a natural life, good things value for a moral life.

It was justifiable to argue that of all the things which the ordinary man calls good, those that are morally good stand in a class of their own and should therefore have their own name. The Stoic was then at liberty to say that he would call them good, confining that word to this use, and employ bad only of moral evil. But he was not entitled to say, as he did, that because a thing was not good or bad (in his sense of the words), it had not the qualities normally indicated by those words. By a bad thing men mean something that is to be feared, regretted, or resented. The Stoic argued as follows: 'what you call a bad

thing is often not bad (in my sense of the word); for example poverty, illness, the loss of loved ones are not bad; therefore they are not to be feared or resented'. But this is a *non-sequitur,* for it has not been proved that nothing except what is morally bad should arouse these emotions. The assumption that this is true depends upon a confusion. Everyone would accept the statement 'only what is bad is to be feared or resented', if bad is used in its normal manner; the Stoics unjustifiably took it for granted that 'nothing that is not morally bad is to be feared and resented'.

What is a natural life?

Among the things that were morally indifferent those that had considerable worth were said to 'have precedence' (*proêgmena*), those with considerable 'unworth' were 'relegated' (*apoproêgmena*). Nothing is heard of those with slight worth or unworth; presumably men have more important things to occupy themselves with. This worth or value was relative to the leading of a 'natural' life or as the Stoics put it, a life 'in accord with nature'; for this can be promoted by everything which our sources represent as having precedence: life as opposed to death, health, beauty, strength, wealth, good reputation, good birth, natural ability, technical skill, moral progress, soundness of limb and of the senses, absence of pain, good memory, an acute mind, parents, and children. But this is not value for a moral life; a man is not made good by the possession of any of these things; even the progress of one who is making headway towards being good does not make him good.

The ambiguity of the Greek word *physis*, translated 'nature', caused much difficulty to ancient thinkers, and it has created trouble for critics and historians of Stoicism. Literally the word means 'growth', then 'the way a thing grows', and by extension 'the way a thing acts and behaves'. By a further extension it came to mean 'the force that causes a thing to act and behave as it does'. For the Stoics this force was something material, a constituent of the body it controls; it was found both in plants and in animals. Each individual animal has its own *physis* or way of growing and behaving, and by this is to be understood the way normal for members of its species. Thus it is part of the *physis* of a man to be able to see and hear. If he is blind

or deaf, that is contrary to his *physis,* against his nature. But *physis* also governs the whole world, since that too was believed to be a living being. The *physis* of the world is identical with God, the immanent controlling force, and itself material; it is a 'fire that is an artificer, proceeding methodically to bring things into being'. (See below pp. 73, 79.) The blindness or deafness of the man is then part of the behaviour of that great animal the world, in which he is, in modern language, a single cell: it is therefore, in accord with the world's nature.

Now although the Stoics drew a clear distinction between a natural and a moral life, they would have hotly denied that a moral life was unnatural. For although human nature in a narrow sense means that a man has certain physical abilities, that he can procreate children, associate with friends, and so on, and a natural life is one in which he has and uses these capacities, yet his nature has also endowed him with reason, and it is on reason that a moral life is founded. This is therefore in its own way also a natural life. Moreover it would be wrong to see in it a life opposed to what was first called a natural life; rather it was regarded as a development, as appears from the account which was given of the growth of a man's consciousness of himself.

This account, probably orthodox doctrine and probably propagated by Chrysippus, starts from the concept of *oikeiôsis,* a word for which there is no adequate English translation. *Oikeion* is the opposite of *allotrion,* what is alien; it is therefore that which 'belongs to you', so that you and it go together. *Oikeiôsis* is then the process of making a thing belong, and this is achieved by the recognition that the thing is *oikeion,* that it does belong to you, that it is yours. Sometimes translators use the words 'dear' and 'endearment', but although this idea is present, those of 'belonging' and 'affinity' are stronger, and these latter terms will be employed in this book.[1]

Diogenes Laertius (7. 85) records the Stoic doctrine as follows:

> They say that an animal's first impulse is to self-preservation, since Nature from the very first gives it a feeling of affi-

[1]S. G. Pembroke in *Problems in Stoicism* ed. A. A. Long p. 116 uses 'concern' and 'make well-disposed'.

nity (*oikeiousês*) to itself, as Chrysippus says in Book I of his *Goals of Life*, where he declares that the first thing that belongs to any animal is its own constitution and consciousness thereof.[1] It is not likely that she would alienate the animal from itself, nor that she would make it and then neither alienate it nor give it a feeling of affinity. One must therefore assert the remaining possibility, namely that having constituted it she gives it this feeling towards itself. That is why it pushes away what is harmful and welcomes what belongs to it.

They show the falsity of the claim made by some people, that the first impulse of animals is towards pleasure: they say that pleasure, if it occurs, is an aftermath, when nature has of her own accord looked for what is fitted to the animal's constitution and obtained it; it is like the sleekness of animals or the thriving of plants.

Nature makes no distinction between plants and animals at the times when she manages the latter as she does the former without employing impulse and sensation, and even in man there are some functions of a vegetable kind. But animals have impulse over and above their vegetable functions, and making use of it they move to obtain that which is properly theirs; and so for them what is natural is to act according to their impulse. But since rational beings have been given reason, to live correctly according to reason becomes natural for them. For it supervenes as a craftsman to control impulse.

It appears then that man's nature from his birth directs him towards the acquisition of certain things that promote his survival and proper constitution. When he acquires reason, which happens spontaneously by the age of fourteen, he begins to modify these primitive impulses; since reason is a gift of nature, this modification is also natural. But he is also

[1]The Greek is uncertain and unsatisfactory. Although the animal may be conscious of its own constitution and feel that consciousness to be something that 'belongs to it', it is not made plain what conclusion follows from that feeling. In a somewhat similar passage of Cicero the child is said to be conscious of itself and therefore fond of itself (*De Finibus* 3.16).

conscious of his rationality; his constitution is no longer the same as it was when he was an infant; it is this new rational constitution and all that goes with it that he now feels to belong to him. He now knows his affinity to morality and to wisdom.

There is another way in which the promptings of nature are extended as a man becomes adult. He is concerned not only with his own survival, but also with that of his race; he has a love of his offspring and an instinct to care for them that can be seen in other animals also. But nature also gives him a desire to live with and help other men; simple forms of this desire for association can be seen in some animals. These feelings and instincts presuppose a recognition that these other people 'belong to us', are ours. Hierocles, an orthodox Stoic of the second century AD (see also p. 170), drew a picture of a man at the centre of a number of concentric circles. In the innermost he stands himself, with his body, and the satisfaction of his physical needs, in the next are his parents, brothers, wife and children, then more distant relations, then members of his deme (ward or village), of his city, of neighbouring cities, of his country, of the human race. Hierocles suggests that we should try to contract the circles, treating e.g. uncles like parents: the ultimate aim would be to treat all men as our brothers.[1] This has been interpreted as a process of coming to feel that the members of each circle in turn belong to us. Elsewhere certainly he speaks of *oikeiôsis* to one's relatives and Cicero makes his champion of Stoicism recognise a natural *oikeiôsis* to all mankind (*De Finibus* 3.63). But it has been objected that it is superfluous to suppose a progress through these circles to a final recognition of affinity with all men, since there are many passages which indicate a belief that man has a natural tendency to love and assist his fellows, from which his *oikeiôsis* to them can be immediately derived. There is no difficulty in this, if there can be degrees of *oikeiôsis,* if it can be felt that where A and B both belong to us, A belongs more than B does. Then recognition of some sort of affinity to any human being may arise without passing through the intermediate stages between him and one's family, but to pass through them

[1]Stobaeus 4 pp. 671–3 Hense.

may be a way to feeling him to belong to one as much as does one's brother.[1]

Here is one way in which the original self-regarding impulses can be modified, as the self is seen to be a part of larger families of men. But there is another way in which man's reason must shape his impulses. The Stoic knows that the world is ordered throughout by the will of God, and that all that happens is part of a single plan. He knows this by faith rather than by argument, although the account which he gives of the physical constitution of things necessitates it. That will be explained later (pp. 72f.) and the difficulties to which this belief gives rise will be examined. But for the moment it is enough to say that an omnipotent and provident deity controls all events. Now it is clear that whereas men aim at what is 'natural' for them, for example to be healthy and to stay alive, sometimes they fall sick and finally all men die. Their illnesses and their death, although apparently contrary to their own individual nature, must nevertheless be part of the whole scheme of things, that is must be in accord with the nature of the world as a whole. Man's reason enables him to recognise that there is this supreme plan, and he can willingly submit himself to it. He will prefer to be healthy and he will act to secure health, because that is the way he is made. But if he falls ill, he knows that this is 'natural' in the wider sense, to be accepted and even welcomed. His

[1]Some scholars have maintained that the doctrine of *oikeiôsis* originated with Theophrastus. Certainly the word occurs once in a fragment (190 Wimmer; not a verbatim quotation), which says that the bee has an *oikeiôsis* to the oak-tree. But this does not imply any general principle, or that man recognised first himself, then external things and persons as 'belonging to him'. The process of growing self-awareness and extending recognition of one's relation to others seems to be a purely Stoic development. Theophrastus claimed that men were akin to one another and also to animals (Porphyry, *On Abstinence* 3.25), but this *oikeiotês* (his word) is no more than an objective physiological and psychological fact, not a feeling of relationship. Arius Didymus ascribes *oikeiôsis* in the Stoic sense to 'Aristotle and the Peripatetics', but in a passage full of Stoic terms and concepts: this came to him from Antiochus, who held that in the main Peripatetics and Stoics had the same views, both derived from Plato. I have no doubt that recent writers are correct in holding that *oikeiôsis* first became important in the Stoa.

reason enables him to transcend his own personal interest and see his own suffering as serving a wider purpose. Chrysippus said:

> So long as the coming sequence of events is not clear to me I always cling to those things that are better adapted for getting what is natural (i.e. natural for me as an individual), since God himself has made me a creature that picks such things. But if I knew that it was fated for me to fall ill now, I should be bent on that. If the foot had brains, it would be bent on getting muddy (quoted by Epictetus, *Discourses* II.6.9).

The sense of the last sentence is that the foot is part of a man, who wishes for his own good reasons to pass through some mud: a rational foot would co-operate, although it would not be to its own advantage to get muddy. Similarly man is part of the world and should co-operate to serve the world's purposes against his own advantage. But this is not against his own good. His good is achieved by rational decision, and reason demands that he should co-operate. Illness is not to his advantage, but he cannot be good unless he accepts his illness. (This does not imply that he should make no attempt to recover; a fated illness is not necessarily a fatal one.)

Illness is usually unexpected, but death can often be foreseen. It was therefore consonant with the Stoic position if both Zeno and his successor Cleanthes, as is reported, and later Antipater hastened their own deaths: they saw that their time had come, and therefore did not fight for life.

The Stoic view may be briefly summed up as follows. Virtue consists in the right approach to things and actions that are in themselves morally indifferent. Some of these have a value, which must however not be exaggerated, others the opposite, an 'unworth', which must equally not be exaggerated: such things are not good or bad. The right approach to what has value will be a positive one, namely to accept it and to act so as to get it; the reaction to what has unworth will be correspondingly negative. But this is not an absolute rule. What may be called the primary interests of the individual sometimes conflict with those of the larger community constituted by the whole world: then he ought to disregard usual values and gladly accept what has

'unworth' for him. Yet this unworth is unimportant, for it attaches to what is contrary only to the lower aspect of his nature; his higher, fully-developed nature is marked by possession of reason, which must, if perfect, coincide with the reason that rules the world, and sometimes allots to him experiences unwelcome in themselves, but acceptable as part of the universal plan.

Cleanthes wrote some verses that well express one element of the attraction that could be exerted by his faith:

> Lead me, O Zeus, and lead me thou, O Fate,
> Unto that place where you have stationed me:
> I shall not flinch, but follow: and if become
> Wicked I should refuse, I still must follow.

Seneca turned these four lines into five of more vigorous and epigrammatic Latin, beginning

> Lead me, father, ruler of high heaven,
> Where you have wished: obedience knows no stay,

and ending

> Fate leads the willing, drags the recusant.

The whole world is ruled by God and nothing in it happens without its being his will. So the good man will accept everything, knowing that it is not only unalterable, since Fate determines all, but also the work of God, the perfect being. Seneca makes him our father, which suggests that he is benevolent. To repine or resist is then folly, for nothing will prevent his will's being done. One may go along with it in willing contentment, or be carried kicking and groaning, in wickedness and misery. This acceptance of all that happens will bring man peace of mind and protection against whatever he may suffer.

Cleanthes' lines say nothing of the other comfort that is offered to the Stoic, namely that his happiness depends entirely upon himself, and is not at the mercy of other persons or the play of outside forces. What brings happiness is to have the right attitude, to choose the right actions, to aim correctly at the mark. This is in the man's own power: success, in the popular

meaning of the word, is not. Unforeseen and incalculable causes may prevent his hitting the target, his actions may be obstructed, his attitude disregarded; but so long as he does all he can and has nothing with which to reproach himself, all is well with him. Whether this is reconcilable with absolute determinism is a difficult question; but for a strong character it is a welcome challenge to be told that he must rely upon himself and that self-reliance is the road to happiness.

Two objections

Here it will be convenient to consider two objections that were raised in antiquity. A pupil of Zeno's, Aristo from Chios, argued that among morally indifferent things there are none that always have precedence. For example, whereas health often has precedence over sickness, a wise man would prefer sickness if its result would be to avoid service under a tyrant and consequent death. He went on to allege that things are given precedence simply in accordance with circumstances, and that none are in themselves such that they have a natural advantage; they are like the letters of the alphabet, of which none is superior to any other, but which are chosen in accord with the word we wish to spell. Now, whereas it may be true that none of the things with precedence is always to be taken and accepted, it does not follow that none has any value in itself: it may occur that something which has precedence and value cannot be taken simultaneously with another thing of even greater value; health and life are both things with precedence, but in the situation imagined by Aristo they are alternatives. His mistake stems from supposing that a thing that has value must always be accepted, whereas the world is not so constituted that we can always take at once everything valuable that is open to us.

Ancient critics attacked Aristo in a different way, saying that his position robbed virtue of content; Cicero, probably following Antiochus (p. 120), repeatedly claims that virtue is abolished and that man has no way of ordering his life, unless value attaches to things that are in themselves morally indifferent. There is some exaggeration in this, since Aristo, like any Stoic, believed that it was virtuous not to yearn after or to fear things which were morally indifferent or to feel pain or joy at their presence. But the absence of these faulty emotions is merely nega-

tive: there are many occasions when a man must choose between positive courses of action; what can guide him to take one or the other, if their results have no value *per se*? 'You will live magnificently', Cicero reports Aristo as saying, 'you will do whatever seems good to you, without pain, desire, or fear'. Elsewhere he explains this to mean that the wise man will do what ever comes into his head (*De Finibus* 4.69, 4.43). It has been maintained that this is a misinterpretation: in reality the wise man will make his choice after considering all the circumstances in the light of correct reason. Perhaps that was Aristo's view, but if it was, it was impracticable. For one thing, life is too short; for another, if nothing but virtue has value *per se*, the temporary value of other things must be due to their promoting virtue and negative value to their encouraging vice. But usually they will be quite irrelevant in these regards. No one avoids the mutilation of his fingers because a damaged hand will make him morally worse.

Aristo, who had a picturesque style, won a circle of supporters. He greatly simplified Stoicism, so that it was hardly distinguishable from the attitude of the Cynics. He rejected the study of logic as useless, that of physics as beyond human capacity. Like the Cynics he must have thought that virtue and vice were easily recognisable, right and wrong obvious. But unlike Crates he did not think it the philosopher's business to give detailed advice; if a man knew that virtue was the only thing for which he should care, he needed no one to tell him how to behave towards his wife or his father. His 'school' did not survive long, its doctrinal weakness being too evident; yet some of his books were still read four centuries later by the young Marcus Aurelius (*Letters of Fronto* 4.13).

The other objection had longer currency, and is still made. If it is good to live 'in agreement with nature', why is the attainment of so many 'natural' things quite immaterial to a good life and to happiness? They include all the 'primary natural things', to use a phrase that Zeno adopted from his Platonist teacher Polemo. What exactly this covered may never have been defined, but the term included health, strength, powers of sensation, perhaps beauty and physical comfort. Aristotle had been unable to accept the complete irrelevance of the possession of such things; he felt it to be a paradox if a man whose

circumstances were extremely disadvantageous could be called happy. Later Antiochus was to maintain that whereas virtue was adequate to make a man happy, his happiness would be increased by the possession of these primary natural things, and something similar seems to have been the position of Polemo. These views are those of common sense.

In defence of the Stoics it may be said that the man who 'lives in accord with nature', that is with the plan of the universe, does not do violence to his own nature. For that nature is rational and directs him sometimes to accept what is contrary to his primary, that is undisciplined, natural impulses. It is clear that it may not be possible to pursue all the instigations of nature simultaneously: one might, for example be able either to protect one's children or to preserve one's health but not both. Similarly, on occasion to follow the purposes of universal nature, with which man's developed nature is in accord, may exclude the simultaneous following of other aspects of his nature. Nor are these other aspects to be seen as opposed to universal nature. Man's nature is part of universal nature and he has been provided with tendencies towards what is normally suitable for him to have. There is no reason why life according to nature should not for the most part mean a life that brings what is 'primarily natural'. But since these tendencies are, as it were, generalised and therefore not always adapted to particular circumstances, man should employ his reason to bring them under control, and to shape them so that his life is in harmony with nature as a whole.

But when this has been said, it remains true that it is strange if the possession of primary natural things is irrelevant to happiness. If they have value *per se,* that ought to affect a man's well-being. Is not X, who is virtuous, healthy, and blessed with admirable children, in some way better off than Y, who is virtuous, sick, and childless? Should we not be right to call him happier? Perhaps we should, but unfortunately the question at issue between the Stoics and their critics was not that, but whether he was more *eudaimon;* and 'happiness', conventionally used as a translation of *eudaimonia,* is (like *eudaimonia* itself) an ambiguous word and none of its meanings a true rendering. Some philosophers make it mean 'balance of pleasure over pain'; the ordinary man may use it of a feeling of satisfaction that can

be transient. But *eudaimonia*, although something experienced by the man who is *eudaimon*, is (perhaps primarily) something objective, that others can recognise—having a good lot in life. 'Call no man happy till he die', because one who is apparently enjoying a good lot may be doing so only temporarily: things may yet go wrong. Thus the Stoics did not attempt to describe *eudaimonia* as a subjective feeling, but identified it with such things as 'living a good life', 'being virtuous', or 'good calculation in the choice of things that possess value'. Similarly in the *Book of Definitions* which originated in the Academy *eudaimonia* is not only 'a good compounded of all goods', but also 'a self-sufficient capacity for living well', or 'perfection in virtue'. For the Stoic, who confines the word 'good' to the morally good, it is consistent that a good life is a morally good life and the well-being indicated by *eudaimonia* is unaffected by what is morally indifferent, however acceptable.

To the other philosophers, who do not so restrict the word 'good', *eudaimonia* must be so affected. The basic matter in dispute is whether there is some category that includes not only virtue but also health, wealth and so on. Popular speech, calling all these things 'good', places them in a single category; they can be added like pence and pounds. To the Stoic they are diverse and can no more be added together than inches and pounds can be. Health and virtue both have value, but their values cannot be summed, just as both inches and pounds are measures, but a measure of length cannot be summed with a measure of wealth.

Virtue

Virtue could be described in many ways, for example as 'an even tenor of life that is always consistent', but it was essentially for the Stoics, as it had been for Socrates, a matter of knowledge or wisdom. In this intellectualist approach they followed not only the Cynics, but also the tradition of the Academy, which held that a man who fully knows what is right must also do it. The Cynics had insisted that knowledge could not be a firm possession without strength of mind, and that strength of mind was to be secured by practice and training: by holding to the truth under temptation a man made himself more capable of holding to it again. The Stoics did not adopt the practices of

self-mortification to which this had led Diogenes, but they recognised that habituation was necessary if virtue was to be acquired. Plato had believed that there were irrational forces in men which they must control before they could reach that sort of knowledge which would guarantee virtuous action. This the Stoics did not accept, holding that the road to virtue was that of training the reason to think correctly. When Zeno therefore wished to define the four cardinal virtues, established by the Platonic tradition, he expressed three of them in terms of the fourth, wisdom: justice was wisdom concerned with assignment (or distribution), sophrosyne (self-control, temperance) was wisdom concerned with acquisition, bravery wisdom concerned with endurance. How he defined wisdom itself is not recorded, but later it was called 'knowledge of what should and should not be done' or 'knowledge of what is good or bad or neither'.[1]

Zeno's pupil Aristo argued, with some plausibility, that it would be logical to believe in a single virtue, knowledge of good and evil, given different names according to the field in which it operated. It was as if we called sight 'albivision' when directed towards white objects, 'nigrivision' when directed towards black; we do in fact call the same coin by different names, a 'fare' or a 'fee' or a 'deposit', according to the purpose for which it is used. Cleanthes said that if a *psychê*, that is to say the 'spirit', conceived as a physical 'breath', which gives a man life and reason, was taut enough (see p. 76), it had a strength which was self-mastery when steadfastness was concerned, bravery when endurance, justice when deserts, temperance when acquisition and avoidance. By removing wisdom from the list of cardinal virtues he seems to have wished to avoid the awkwardness of Zeno's scheme, which is most naturally interpreted in Aristo's manner. In this revised scheme each virtue could be different by a modification in the tension of the *psyche*: but that is no more than a guess at his meaning.

Chrysippus attacked Aristo's position at length, preserving

[1]These alternatives illustrate the fact that the word *phronêsis*, translated 'wisdom', covered both theoretical and practical wisdom, both knowledge of what is or exists and of what ought to be done. Its limitation to practical wisdom was an Aristotelian move, and even he recognised that practical wisdom was not independent of theoretical, which he called *sophia*.

the traditional cardinal virtues and maintaining that they could be distinguished by their own characteristics and not merely by the fields in which they operated. Galen devoted many pages to denouncing his arguments as bad ones, without revealing what they were. But he is known to have asserted that each virtue was a different state of the 'breath' which constituted the *psyche*. Nor was he content to distinguish four virtues: there were minor virtues within each of the cardinal virtues, a whole swarm of them, as Plutarch complained.

Yet, although the virtues were different, they implied one another, and could not exist separately. All depended on the knowledge of what was good and bad, and a man who had that knowledge must possess all the virtues. Chrysippus even said that every virtuous action involved every virtue, an opinion that it would be hard to maintain: perhaps it is to be seen as a paradoxical sharpening of the truth that some virtuous actions involve all four cardinal virtues.

Chrysippus enjoyed paradox. Sometimes it was a question of pushing principles to what seemed a logical extreme. Thus he probably said that if any wise man anywhere stretched out his finger wisely, the action was useful to all wise men everywhere. This depends on three principles: all wise men are friends to one another; friends have all things in common, what belongs to one belongs to all; any wise action is useful to the man who performs it. But many of the paradoxes about the wise, for which the Stoics became notorious, were dependent on the use of a word in an unusual sense. They made statements startlingly false, if taken to be in ordinary language, but which could be true with another interpretation. Thus the wise man is a rich man, not in money but in what is truly valuable, the virtues; he is beautiful, not with physical beauty but with that of the intellect; he is a free man, even if a slave, because he is master of his own thoughts. He alone is a king: for by 'king' is meant an ideal ruler, who must know what is good and evil. He alone is a prophet, a poet, an orator, a general, for he alone knows how to follow these professions as they should be followed to achieve acceptable results. The other side of the medal is that every man who is not wise is a slave, to his fears and cupidities; a madman, for his beliefs are hallucinations; a wretched man, for he has no true cause for joy. Nothing is useful for him, nothing belongs

to him, nothing suits him; for nothing is useful but virtue, which he lacks, nothing belongs unless it cannot be taken away, nothing that is not virtue is a suitable possession. Many of these paradoxes were taken over from the Cynics, whose practice in this followed a Socratic tradition.

It might be supposed that the perfectly moral man, being perfectly wise, would never aim at things that in the event he would not succeed in getting or achieving. He would know in advance when the demands of his own nature must be subordinated because they conflicted with the universal plan. He would know when he was fated to fall ill. If he was a general or a statesman he would know what he could undertake with success and what he could not. There are texts which suggest such omniscience. But it was hardly credible that anyone could attain it, however much experience and the art of prophecy might enable him to foresee coming events. Accordingly Seneca declares, as if it were orthodox doctrine, that 'the wise man comes to everything with the proviso "if nothing happens to prevent it"; therefore we say that he succeeds in everything and nothing happens contrary to his expectation, because he presupposes that something can intervene to prevent his design' (*On Services Rendered*, 4.34; cf. Stobaeus 2 p. 115 H.). But there is nothing to show how soon it became orthodox, nor how soon it was appreciated that although no craft, trade, or profession could be correctly carried on except by a wise man, a wise man would not for example be able to play a wind-instrument without learning its technique, and that a wise man could not be expected to learn the techniques of all the arts.

If 'good' is an absolute term, applicable only to moral perfection, if there are no grades of goodness, good men will be very few and far between. Zeno and Cleanthes may have thought goodness a practicable goal; for Chrysippus it had effectively become an unattainable ideal. It became orthodox to recognise that all human beings are, and inevitably remain, bad and unhappy. There was no intermediate state between goodness and badness. Moreover just as 'good' was an absolute, so was 'bad'; there were no grades of badness. This was not a necessary consequence: although it is true that there cannot be grades of perfection—it is an abuse of language to say that one thing is more perfect than another—it does not follow that there are no grades