https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052503202016 Published online by Cambridge University Press

STOIC AUTONOMY

By John M. Cooper

I. Introduction

As it is currently understood, the notion of autonomy, both as something that belongs to human beings and human nature, as such, and also as the source or basis of morality (that is, duty), is bound up inextricably with the philosophy of Kant. The term "autonomy" itself derives from classical Greek, where (at least in surviving texts) it was applied primarily or even exclusively in a political context, to civic communities possessing independent legislative and self-governing authority.[1] The term was taken up again in Renaissance and early modern times with similar political applications, but was applied also in ecclesiastical disputes about the independence of reformed churches from the former authority in religious matters of the church of the Roman popes.[2] Kant's innovation consisted in conceiving of (finite) individual rational persons, as such, as lawgivers or legislators to themselves, and to all rational beings (or rather to all that are not perfect and holy wills), for their individual modes of behavior. For Kant, rational beings possess a power of legislating for themselves individually, according to which they each set their own personal ends and subject that selection, and their pursuit of the ends in question, to a universal principle, which is expressed in Kant's *categorical imperative*. The categorical imperative requires that one set one's own ends only within a framework that would warrant acceptance by all other such beings. For Kant, autonomy accompanies individual (finite) rationality, and has nothing to do with the political (or other organizational) circumstances of any specific community of agents, even though it un-

[1] See H. G. Liddell, Robert Scott, and H. S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), s.vv. αὐτονομία, αὐτόνομος. See also Martin Ostwald, *Autonomia: Its Genesis and Early History*, American Philological Association *American Classical Studies* 11 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982). Ostwald, building upon E. J. Bickerman's demonstration ("Autonomia: Sur un passage de Thucydide [1,144,2]," *Revue Internationale des Droits de l'Antiquité* 5 [1958]: 313–44) that the term belongs to the vocabulary of interstate relations, argues persuasively that it was coined in order to help weaker states drawn into an orbit of dependence on a stronger one to assert and preserve their limited independence. (Such states included especially Athens' allies in the Delian League, which was initially established to combat the Persians, in 478–77 B.C.E.) The term was not applied in classical times to the stronger states themselves.

[2] Here I follow the summary provided in J. B. Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3 n. 2, and the full account in R. Pohlmann, "Autonomie," in J. Ritter, ed., *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (Basel: Schwabe, 1971), 1:701–19, to which Schneewind refers.

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derstandably gave rise to the conception of a "kingdom" or "realm" of ends in which each (fully) rational end-setter would cooperate with, and support, all other end-setters in a harmonious pursuit by all of their individual self-set ends, under the umbrella of the commonly legislated categorical imperative.

Without making any reference to possible influences of Stoic ideas upon Kant—that would be beyond my competence, and anyhow would be work for a subsequent study—I shall explore here what I think are related ideas in ancient Stoicism. Before doing so, however, it might be both interesting and helpful to review the early history of the term "autonomy," particularly as it was applied to individuals.

So far as I have been able to determine, there are just three places in surviving classical Greek literature (i.e., down to Roman imperial times) where the term is applied to individuals, as such, and without immediate reference to political autonomy, so understood. In one passage of Sophocles' *Antigone* (821, referred to in Liddell-Scott-Jones) the chorus, in a lyric exchange with Antigone about her already decreed punishment, by being deposited alive in a blocked-off cavern to make her own way to Hades, speaks of her as the only mortal to descend to Hades alive and "of her own law" (αὐτόνομος). The unusual choice of word here (where the basic meaning intended seems to be "of her own free will"—ἑκών—and the word is applied not in virtue of any political autonomy) must, however, have something to do with Antigone's own tragic insistence, which has led to her predicament, on following the higher religious law that requires burial for her traitorous brother in the face of directives of King Cleon forbidding it. If she does go down to Hades while still alive, and by her own act of defiance, that, too, will be a case of her following her own ideas of what law itself—religious and civic—requires in a case of such conflict with civic authority. In going down to Hades "of her own law," she is deciding for herself which law (or directive) to follow—with this consequence. So, even here the context of political independence for the use of this term is not lacking, although it is a highly unusual case of it; there is no hint here of Kantian self-legislation of ends or of principles of self-criticism.

Somewhat similar is a passage of Xenophon's *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians* (3.1), where he praises Lycurgus's Spartan arrangements for teenage boys, contrasting them with customs in other cities, where boys upon reaching that age are freed from daily oversight by tutors (παιδαγωγοί) and left "to be their own law" (αὐτονόμους): the implied contrast here is with the laws (νόμοι) of Lycurgus (see the reference to those in 1.2, 8). Teenagers in other cities are not under special laws of good and modest behavior at all, of the sort that Xenophon goes on to detail that were in force in Sparta (3.2–4); hence, they can be described as being "their own law"—they are allowed to do what they please (this is the meaning), since they are *not* subject to "youth laws" at all. In the "epilogue" of the *Panathenaic Oration* (215), Isocrates turns the tables on Xenophon (whether the

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052503202016 Published online by Cambridge University Press

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052503202016 Published online by Cambridge University Press

correction is intended or not) in seeking to draw favorable attention to his own allegedly balanced account, earlier in the speech, of Sparta's contributions to the values of Hellenism, alongside those of Athens. He puts into the mouth of an unnamed former pupil, described as well known for his praise of Spartan practices, the word αὐτονομία, with strongly negative connotation, to describe one of the practices that Xenophon had praised so highly himself (2.6–9): that of encouraging young Spartans to steal food and other supplies from the non-Spartan country dwellers, provided that they could do so undetected. Thus, Isocrates seems to be saying, Xenophon was not right to count other Greeks' failure to have "youth laws" as granting the youths reckless "autonomy"; on the contrary, the Spartans are the ones who are guilty in this instance of making the boys and youths behave in recklessly "autonomous" ways that everyone else knows are disgraceful, despite their being demanded by Lycurgan laws.

Thus, even in these three apparently anomalous passages, personal "autonomy" carries with it a clear contrast to some existing legal provision with which it conflicts. As we shall see in the next section, it is only with Dio Chrysostom's *80th Discourse* (end of the first century C.E.), that we first find the terms αὐτόνομος and αὐτονομία used for personal autonomy understood in approximately Kant's way.

II. Dio Chrysostom on the "Autonomous" Lives of Philosophers

In speaking of ideas related to Kant's in ancient Stoicism, I have primarily in mind the work of the original Stoics of the third century B.C.E. and especially that of the great philosopher Chrysippus. However, in order to introduce the themes I want to discuss in this essay, I begin by citing a fascinating and, in this context, apparently overlooked oration of the late first century C.E. popular philosopher, Dio of Prusa (who is also called Dio Chrysostom, "of the golden mouth," in recognition of his powerfully inspiring speechifying). Dio was not strictly a Stoic philosopher—he apparently did not teach or hold forth in any "school"—but he did study at Rome with the important Roman Stoic, Musonius Rufus (who taught in Greek, and who had among his other pupils Epictetus). During the middle decades of his life, Dio was a wandering orator, in forced exile from both Rome and his home in Bithynia, in northwest Asia Minor. He was a popular proponent of salvation through "the philosophical life." His conception of what that life is like and the source of its value owes a very great deal to Stoic theory and example. The discourse that I have in mind is the eighteith and last in the standard order, and bears the title *On Freedom* (Περὶ ἐλευθερίας).[3]

[3] *Dio Chrysostom*, V, trans. H. Lamar Crosby, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052503202016 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Dio opens the discourse with a conceit. He attributes to his audience bafflement at, and dismissal of, the odd behavior of self-professed philosophers, who wander around the town, sporting beards, wearing torn cloaks reminiscent of Socrates, preferably walking barefoot, with no remunerative occupation or ordinary social connections, and paying no attention to the theatrical or other spectacles of Greek city-life. Rather, they attend individually to passersby on the street and engage them in conversation, or else just stand there in the middle of things, thinking (80.2). Dio then turns the tables, by declaring that only such philosophers are, in fact, in the condition, which was highly prized by all ordinary Greeks, of freedom (ἐλευθερία). Ordinary people, these critics of philosophers, are definitely not free; they are actually slaves. Indeed, Dio insists, only the philosopher is αὐτόνομος, living under his own law (another, related, condition that was highly prized in the Greek cities). In contrast, all ordinary people are subject to direction by outside forces (80.3); they are not under their own law. Money, fame, or pleasures with their alluring appeal are their self-imposed mistresses; they are in fact, Dio says, their self-imposed fetters and enslavement (80.7–14).

Dio goes on to explain (80.3–6) that the *political* autonomy that the cities and tribes have constantly fought for, from time immemorial, is worthless if (as, in fact, is the case) the people possessing it are themselves, individually, merely slaves. Indeed, even the great lawgivers of the politically autonomous cities, for example, Solon in Athens, were not personally autonomous themselves (τούτων οὐδενὶ μετῆν αὐτονομίας), since the laws that they gave were not actually the laws that would have satisfied themselves, but rather, only less satisfactory (indeed, bad) laws that were the best that their fellow citizens could be persuaded to accept (80.4). Thus the lawgivers lacked autonomy, because the laws that they were famous for establishing were not ones that, if the lawgivers were left to themselves, they would have laid down for everyone, including themselves, to obey. The actual laws were not really *their* laws at all. In fact, autonomy—self-rule, living under one's own laws—only comes when one obeys the law of nature (ὁ τῆς φύσεως νόμος), that is to say, the ordinance of Zeus (τὸν τοῦ Διὸς θεσμόν). This is the only law that is true, and that has any valid authority. Although it is open to view, people do not see it, and do not make *it* the leader of their lives.[4] This, however, is precisely what the philosopher does see, and what he does do. In living by the law of nature, the law of Zeus, he also lives by his *own* law—and so obtains true autonomy, the only autonomy worth having.

In this short discourse, Dio uses the Greek words for "autonomous" or "autonomy" repeatedly (four times in all),[5] always in a usage that he

[4] νόμον δὲ τὸν ἀληθῆ καὶ κύριον καὶ φανερὸν οὔτε ὁρῶσιν οὔτε ἡγεμόνα ποιοῦνται τοῦ βίου (80.5).

[5] Five, if one counts, as well, the very striking phrase that he substitutes once in explication or variation: τοῖς αὐτὸς αὑτοῦ χρῆσθαι νόμοις (80.3), "to use oneself one's own laws."

himself clearly grasps and, indeed, clearly explains, but in which the terms do not appear, except, at best, in very undeveloped form (see n. 1), in Greek of the classical period. Classical Greek refers only glancingly to persons governing themselves individually on the basis of their own "laws" (i.e., laws that are, if not necessarily self-imposed, then at least self-chosen or self-recognized). One striking feature of the text is that Dio first uses this terminology (80.3) before he introduces (in 80.5) any reference to laws of nature or of Zeus, which, as I mentioned, he eventually equates with the "laws" that a philosopher, in living according to his own laws, will obey. The idea of autonomy, as Dio uses the term from the outset, is simply that of living according to one's own "laws" of personal behavior. But what laws could these be? What justifies any claim, of the sort that Dio makes from the very beginning, and before making any reference to nature's law, that what the philosophers live according to are entitled to the name of *laws*? How is this to be understood?

It helps that Dio couples the term autonomy with freedom (ἐλευθερία) at its first occurrence, and slavery (ἐν οἰκέταις 80.3; cf. δουλεία 80.4) with the lack of autonomy, both in the personal and in the political spheres. It was a commonplace of Stoic theory, which Dio could confidently expect his readers to recall immediately upon hearing philosophers described as the only free persons, that only perfected human beings, or "wise" people in Stoic terminology,[6] are free, while everyone else is both a fool and (therefore) a slave.[7] As Cicero explains the Stoic view (*Stoic Paradoxes* 5, sec. 34), if freedom is the power to live as you will (*potestas vivendi ut velis*), then, in fact, only the wise are free.[8] Only the wise have a clearly conceived plan of life which they unwaveringly also follow; only they never do anything from fear, or through any threat or coercion; only they never regret anything that they have to do, or anything that they have done. Everyone else acts in obedience to circumstances, acting as *circumstances* direct, so as to avoid pain, or monetary loss, or the like, and following opportunities for pleasure or gain as circumstances dictate. Such a person acts in the abject and broken spirit of a slave, as Cicero puts it, ordered about willy-nilly—as a person that has no will of its own (*arbitrio carentis suo*) (sec. 35). Only wise people live as they themselves will. Even if they, too, vary their behavior to suit their circumstances, as everyone must, they do this not in pursuance of any fundamental attachment to anything that circumstances can control—that is, any external

[6] Σοφοί, traditionally rendered in English by "sages"—but it is better to avoid that term nowadays, since it smacks of pretentiousness and obscurantism, and it was no part of Stoic theory that a wise person would have either of those qualities.

[7] See Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, trans. R. D. Hicks, Loeb Classical Library, two volumes (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), 7.121. For evidence that these claims were already, and offensively, made by Zeno, the Stoic founder, in his *Republic*, see 7.32–33.

[8] In H. Rackham, ed. and trans., *Cicero* IV, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942).

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object or condition, whether pleasant, or painful, or possessed of any other concrete characteristics. They act only out of a single, consistent desire, in every circumstance, simply to "follow nature." (And, of course, their wisdom consists centrally in knowing what following nature means, in each circumstance that may arise.) Thus the wise, and only the wise, are free, according to well-known Stoic principles, because only they, in consistently "following nature" in all their actions, are acting on their *own* will—their will to follow nature. They are never led by the nose by particular, concretely characterized events that occur or that are in prospect. Diogenes Laertius, in setting out the Stoic view, speaks of this freedom as the "power of 'self-action,'" the power to do one's own actions (ἐξουσίαν αὐτοπραγίας, 7.121).[9]

Still, it is quite a step from freedom as self-action and acting according to one's own will (αὐτοπραγία), to autonomy or living according to one's own laws (αὐτονομία). As if to distract the listener from recoiling at his novel conception of autonomy as something that belongs to individuals as such (without reference to their political circumstances), Dio immediately follows up by leaving aside freedom understood in Cicero's way, as an individual's "self-action," and pursues, instead, the implications of *political* freedom, and the autonomy that goes with that. It was for that sort of autonomy, he says, instead of this philosophical independence, that tribes and cities have always fought[10]—fruitlessly, he says, as the history of Solon's legislation shows. The laws of Athens that we know as Solon's were not "his own" laws: as Solon himself confessed in a famous poem, he was not (as Dio puts it) "autonomous" in laying down the political laws and social practices that he devised and imposed on everyone, himself included (once he returned from a voluntary, ten-year-long exile). He imposed not the laws that he would have preferred, but the ones that he thought the citizens would accept. Under those laws, the Athenians continued to be slaves in their dependence on external circumstances, even after achieving political self-rule under Solon's laws. Political autonomy was therefore useless to them, and so it is to all of us, as well. By contrast, Dio suggests, philosophers, however bizarre they might appear in the eyes of ordinary people and however unconventional their way of life may be, have not only freedom but *true autonomy*—a life truly under their own rule, under their own laws.

[9] Plutarch quotes a passage of Chrysippus's lost work *On Lives*, where Chrysippus equated the Platonic phrase, familiar from the *Republic* (and the *Charmides*), "to do one's own" (τὰ αὑτοῦ πράττειν, which is characteristic of virtuous people, for example, just or temperate ones), with αὐτοπραγία or "self-action": *Plutarch: Moralia*, XIII, ed. and trans. H. C. Cherniss, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), pt. 2, *Stoic Self-Contradictions* 1043b.

[10] There is a problem with the text at this point; the MSS read in 80.3 something ungrammatical and unintelligible, ἀνόητοι εἴδους αὐτονομίας ἔρωτι ἐρῶτες. I am not satisfied with the emendations that have been proposed by Post (printed, e.g., in the Loeb text and translated there) and others, but I believe that this issue does not affect what I say in my text.

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It is only at this point (80.5–6), when he goes on to speak of the laws of nature and the laws of Zeus, that we hear from Dio any reason at all for thinking of the philosopher's or the wise person's life in that way, as one under "his own laws." Now we can see, but not before, that for the philosopher, living by his own will (freedom) is living by his own laws (autonomy), because his consistent will is not only to follow nature, or Zeus, but also in doing so, to obey nature's and Zeus's *law*. As Dio, and his audience, too, knew very well, it was a central tenet of Stoicism that this is what following nature means. As we hear from Diogenes Laertius (7.88), the Stoic "end," which is understood as living following nature (τὸ ἀκολούθως τῇ φύσει ζῆν), involves not doing anything that "the law common to all things" (ὁ νόμος ὁ κοινός) normally forbids; and, as Diogenes tells us, this law is equated with the correct reason (λόγος) that runs through everything and is the same as Zeus. So, in living following nature—that is, as we have seen from Cicero's explication, in living freely and by his own will—the Stoic philosopher also lives by Zeus's or nature's law, which thereby becomes his own law for himself.

It seems, then, that Dio felt the need to draw upon both the Greeks' overriding goal of political autonomy and his claim that it fails to make people truly free (by the stringent, but well and forcefully articulated, standards of Stoic philosophy), in order to prepare the way for, and to validate retrospectively, this conception of philosophical freedom as a more important, indeed, the only true kind of, "autonomy." This seems to me to be some indication that the idea of personal, as against political, autonomy, which he introduces in this roundabout way, may have been Dio's invention. At the least, it does not seem that such use of the term was common coin by his time. (As I mentioned above, no earlier ancient author whose works have come down to us presents any such idea.) Thus, it seems that Dio juxtaposed, for the first time, the standard Stoic idea of the philosopher's (or, rather, the wise person's) freedom with another standard Stoic idea, that the philosopher (or the wise person) always obeys nature's and Zeus's law. The result is a conception of the philosopher or the wise person as the only one who truly lives autonomously, that is, by his own law.

III. Rationality as the Ground of Autonomy

Although they seem never to have used the term autonomy in this connection, I suggest that the classical Stoics did, in fact, conceive the lives of wise people in just this way—as lives lived autonomously, under each individual's own law, where that law is also, and indeed by its origin, Zeus's or nature's law. The implication here—since the wise person is simply the perfected human being—is that Zeus's or nature's law is our law too, the law of human beings as such. So, it is only through

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accepting and implementing in one's life Zeus's law, that is, Stoic morality, that any human being achieves autonomy and lives autonomously. What in Stoic theory grounds this idea? This question is the focus of my discussion in the following sections of this essay.

The key point here is that, for the Stoics, human beings, and, out of all of nature's creations,[11] only human beings, are rational—only they possess the power of reasoning. It is important, though, to attend closely to what this power consists in, for the Stoics. We, with modern understandings of reason, might be inclined to think that it is simply the ability to tell what follows from what, or, in general, to deal with given data so as to form some reasoned opinion about what to think on the basis of them about some question that might be asked. But that is not how the Stoics, or indeed ancient philosophers, in general, think about rationality.[12] Rather, for them, reason is constituted, in the first instance (subject to further developments and perfections), by (the possession of) a somewhat open-ended set of particular *concepts*, which are themselves regarded as a body of basic knowledge, rationally articulated. Human beings are not born rational, and no child before "the age of reason" has any effective rational capacities at all.[13] As children we follow natural instincts, aided, of course, by parental guidance, in seeking our growth and survival in our environments. In doing so, we come, through naturally imbued procedures, to form original, "natural" concepts of all sorts of objects, and their properties, that we confront in our experience. We only become rational, or possessed of reason, when, after a long period of such exposure to the world around us, we have accumulated this basic set of concepts. Thus, as we develop, we get an idea, or a concept, of human beings themselves (what it is to be a human being), of males and females, of mothers and fathers, of trees and plants that are of interest to us, of animals, such as dogs, or cats, or cows, or mice, that are found in our environments and that make a difference to us. As we seek to grow and survive, we also form concepts of various foods, of utensils, and, of course, of all the colors and tastes, and sounds and textures, that matter to us in our daily lives. In addition to accumulating such basic knowledge as children, as we develop we also get the concepts of good and bad, and certain other evaluative notions.

To say that we get these concepts "naturally" is to say that (still on the Stoic theory) we do not reach them by calculating or inferring anything in any way, for example from our experiences; we just naturally, given our experiences of, and with, the world around us, form the relevant con-

[11] That is, its creations on or in the vicinity of the earth. The exception implied here is meant to cover the sun and moon and stars, which, according to the Stoics, were rational beings, too—I do not mean to suggest that the Stoics envisaged or accepted any such nonhuman rational beings as, e.g., creatures on alien planets, or creatures flying through the air as angels.

[12] On what follows see M. Frede, "The Stoic Conception of Reason," in K. J. Boudouris, ed., *Hellenistic Philosophy*, vol. 2 (Athens: International Association for Greek Philosophy, 1994), 50–61.

[13] What I mean here by "effective" will become clear below.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052503202016 Published online by Cambridge University Press

cepts. You could say that this is how we are made, how we are constituted by nature when we are born into the world. We are born so as to develop in this way, and we do so develop unless some untoward circumstance prevents it. In fact, because we do not reach our first and basic concepts by any sort of reasoning, but simply by a natural process of development, the Stoics think that these are guaranteed to be correct concepts: concepts such that their content is guaranteed to apply to, to be true of, some of what the world itself contains. The world contains things of which our basic, natural concepts are true, just because those concepts have been reached in our development by these natural, noninferential, and on our part, totally nonvoluntary routes. We (our minds) have contributed nothing to the concepts' formation, so there is no possibility of distortion or mistake in them from our own minds. And what other source of mistake should anyone imagine there might be?

For a human to be a rational being, then, is, in the first instance, to possess this basic stock of totally natural, well-grounded and correct, concepts. These are concepts that all human beings, as such, will have, wherever and whenever they live, if they have not been specially prevented or deprived.[14] Thus, to be rational, for the Stoics, is first of all to possess a certain stock of basic knowledge: knowledge about the objects that a human being deals with in the ordinary course of living, and of the properties of those objects on the basis of which this ordinary interaction takes place. These objects and properties really are such as we conceive them, through our "natural" concepts. (Below, I will consider some of the implications of this.) So far, I have said nothing about reasoning itself, that is, the power to draw inferences, to recognize logical consequence and incompatibility. These powers, it appears, are thought by the Stoics to be implicated in the possession of all concepts, including, of course, the concepts that constitute this basic stock.[15] To have the concept of a dog, for example, is (in part) to know that anything that *is* a dog has four legs (unless one has been removed, or the animal has suffered some horrendous birth defect), and that if a thing is not alive at all, or not made of flesh and hair (but rather, say, of metal) it is not a dog. Thus, the Stoic conception of reason does include the capacity to think logically (using, e.g., as in these illustrations, *modus ponens* and *modus tollens*), but in their view, that capacity is conceived as a component of "natural" conceptual knowledge, in the possession of which rationality basically consists. This is not some further capacity on its own, and, of course, it is not, by itself, the whole of rationality or even rationality's basic element.

Being rational does not, however, mean simply that one possesses basic knowledge and basic thinking capacities. When we reach "the age of

[14] So the Stoics seem to have thought. But maybe this was intended to be subject to a certain amount of local or even temporal variation—the "natural" concepts for one group of humans living in one environment might differ in some particulars from the "natural" ones for another group.

[15] See the discussion by Frede, "The Stoic Conception of Reason," 54–55.

reason" and become rational beings, instead of the nonrational, brute animal-like beings that children are, even while undergoing the experiences from which they are arriving at the basic concepts, our nature now becomes such that we *use* our rationality in all of our perceptual experiences, in everything we think, and in everything we do. Plutarch, in his essay *On Moral Virtue* (450d), quotes Chrysippus clearly to this effect: "[T]he rational animal is disposed naturally to use reason in all things and to be governed by it."[16] Before achieving the "age of reason," we may, and will as we progress, have a limited ability to use such concepts as we have begun to acquire, and so to reason in ways that belong to them, but that is an on-and-off affair. Its results do not determine what we think or what we do; natural instincts and inclinations continue to prevail with us, regardless. However, after we reach the "age of reason," we use reason in all of our perceptions, all of our thoughts, and all of our actions, by a necessity of our nature. This means that when we see, say, a dog, and it looks to us like a dog, we are using our relevant concepts—thinking that, according to what we know a dog to be, this thing that we see *looks like that*, that is, it looks like it has the properties that are contained in our dog-concept. And we must either accept this impression, and judge that it *is* a dog (i.e., that it actually instantiates the characteristics contained in the concept); or we must reject this impression (holding that, despite appearances, the thing that is seen does not instantiate those characteristics); or else we must suspend judgment either way, withholding any claim that it does, or that it does not, have the included properties. (I do not mean to say that any discursive process to such conclusions necessarily takes place, only that such is the content of the thought that one thinks.) Being rational means operating in this way, by a necessity of one's nature.

Now, in these acceptances and rejections truth and falsehood play a directive role, again by virtue of what a rational nature itself includes. What one holds to be true is what one accepts (and to accept something is to accept that it is true), and what one holds to be false is what one rejects (and to reject it is to declare that it is false). Thus, Epictetus says (*Discourses* 3.3.2), "It is the nature of every soul [he means, every rational one] to nod yes to the true [i.e., what one takes to be true], to nod no to the false, and to suspend on the unclear."[17] Rational nature, simply being what it is, pursues the true and flees from the false. But equally, as Epictetus in this passage goes on to say, it also pursues the good (i.e., what it takes to be good) and avoids the bad. The rational soul's nature

[16] *Plutarch: Moralia*, VI, ed. and trans. W. C. Helmbold, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1939). The Greek text of the passage here translated is: τοῦ λογικοῦ ζῴου φύσιν ἔχοντος προσχρῆσθαι εἰς ἕκαστα τῷ λόγῳ καὶ ὑπὸ τούτου κυβερνᾶσθαι.

[17] Epictetus, *The Discourses, as Reported by Arrian, the Manual and Fragments*, bks. 3–4, ed. and trans. W. A. Oldfather, Vol. 2, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928). The Greek text of the passage here translated is: πέφυκεν δὲ πᾶσα ψυχὴ ὥσπερ τῷ ἀληθεῖ ἐπινεύειν, πρὸς τὸ ψεῦδος ἀνανεύειν, πρὸς τὸ ἄδηλον ἐπέχειν.

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is "to be moved with desire for the good, with aversion from the bad, and in neither way to what is neither bad nor good."[18] Here we should recall that the concept of good (with, as its correlative, that of bad) is among the basic pieces of knowledge that Stoic theory claims all human beings acquire, by natural means, by the "age of reason." Thus, once we are at, and past, that point in our lives, we are, as part of being rational, only ever moved toward action by the idea that something that is to be obtained (or avoided) by acting is either good or bad (and the rational desire for the good and aversion from the bad are what always motivate us).[19] In contrast, anything that we take to be neither good nor bad leaves us completely unmoved. It is, of course, quite possible, indeed quite normal, even virtually universal, for human beings frequently to mistake what is false or unclear for what is true, and vice versa, or to be moved to desire something that is not, in fact, good at all, or to be averse from something that is not bad at all. Indeed, most human beings desire as good, and are repelled from as bad, only things that are actually neither bad nor good, according to Stoic theory. But in both sorts of cases, human beings are wielding correct concepts of the true and false, of good and bad; that is, they have an adequate basic knowledge of what it is to be true and what it is to be good (no doubt, however, it is not a completely developed knowledge). Their error lies in thinking that things that do not, in fact, instantiate the characteristics that are included in those concepts do instantiate them.

In fact, in rational nature itself, according to the Stoics, there are certain inherent standards for judging what is true, or false, or simply unclear. The rules of logic are among these. So, if you accept some propositions as true, and they together imply some other proposition, then you ought to accept the latter as true, as well (if you think of it at all), on the ground of that implication. Your rationality commits you to this, whether or not, in particular cases, you follow this rule when it applies. This rule is a norm of rational behavior, inherent in rationality itself. In a similar way, Chrysippus notoriously insisted that some sensory impressions are such that when you experience them, as some later Stoics put it, they "all but seize you by the hair and drag you to assent."[20] These sensory impressions are so very obviously, manifestly, indisputably true that it would be deeply

[18] πρὸς μὲν τὸ ἀγαθὸν ὀρεκτικῶς κινεῖσθαι, πρὸς δὲ τὸ κακὸν ἐκκλιτικῶς, πρὸς δὲ τὸ μήτε κακὸν μήτε ἀγαθὸν οὐδετέρως.

[19] Here we should recall that, for Stoics, even misguided and emotional desires, "appetites" and anger, and so on, are functions of our reason. These may be irrational in the sense of being contrary to reason's proper standards for what should be desired, for what should be thought good or bad, or in what way one should desire something. But these desires and so forth are not irrational in the sense of being nonrational, that is, having some origin or seat in the human soul other than its rational nature. See, e.g., Plutarch, *On Moral Virtue*, 446f–447a, and the section "The Stoic Theory of the Emotions" in my introduction to Seneca's *On Anger*, John M. Cooper and J. F. Procopé, *Seneca: Moral and Political Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 5–10.

[20] As Sextus Empiricus reports (*Against the Theoreticians* [*M.*], 7.257). See *Sextus Empiricus*, II, trans. R. G. Bury, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press,

irrational not to accept them as such. The Stoics are not speaking here of any external compulsion, or any internal, merely psychological one, either, but, rather, of what you necessarily do simply because you are rational. You can see so *clearly*, when you have an impression of this kind, that the impression is true, that it could not possibly *not* be true. Your rational commitment to seeking the truth demands that you accept such an impression. While we do not find in our sources any special elaboration of such "rules" or "standards" of right reason, it is clear that the Stoics do suppose that rational nature presents itself to itself as answerable to such standards, even in cases where one might, in fact, be violating them. No doubt it is the task of philosophy to articulate the original and basic standards, and to expand their range by formulating new ones. But, in principle, all of these are standards to which rational beings, as such, are committed simply by their nature as rational. All anyone needs to do in order to recognize these standards is to think enough so as to see, on the basis of their own thought, that they are committed to them.

IV. Zeus's or Nature's Rationality

In the preceding section I discussed what, according to Stoic theory, the power or capacity of reason (or reasoning) consists in. Now we need to take into account the fact that, for Stoics, the natural world as a whole, including not only our bodies but also our minds, is animated by a single mind, a single rational being and rational nature—Zeus. The natural world is a material world. Everywhere in it there is matter, of one formation and complexity or another, and there are no gaps of emptiness.[21] However, Zeus is also everywhere in the world, and Zeus, although he is a single body spread out everywhere, is not at all a *material* body.[22] Material bodies reduce ultimately to four basic material elements: fire, air, water, and earth.[23] But the body that Zeus is is not made of any of these elements, not even of elemental fire taken on its own.[24] (Indeed, although

1935), 7.257. The Greek text of the passage here translated is: αὕτη γὰρ ἐναργὴς οὖσα καὶ πληκτικὴ μόνον οὐχὶ τῶν τριχῶν, φασί, λαμβάνεται, κατασπῶσα ἡμᾶς εἰς συγκατάθεσιν.

[21] See, for example, Galen, *On the Differences in Pulses*, quoted in J. von Arnim, *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903–1924), 2:139–40 (= *SVF* 2.424), translated, in part, in A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1:293 (= *LS* 49D).

[22] Zeus is everywhere in the world: see Alexander of Aphrodisias, *On Mixture*, ed., I. Bruns, *Supplementum Aristotelicum* (Berlin: Reimer, 1892), II.ii.225, 1–2 (trans. in *LS* 45H). Zeus is not a material body: see, in addition to Alexander, Diogenes Laertius 7.134 (trans. in *LS* 44B, first part) together with Cicero, *Academica*, 1.39 (trans. in *LS* 45A).

[23] See Diogenes Laertius, 7.135–36 and 7.142 (trans. in *LS* 46B and 46C).

[24] See Stobaeus, *Selections*, ed. C. Wachsmuth and O. Hense (Berlin: Weidmann, 1884), 1:129–30 (= *SVF* 2.413, trans., in part, in *LS* 47A). Note that on the account that Stobaeus provides here (attributing it to Chrysippus), god is the "element" of all things in a very special sense. God is what causes generation out of itself in a methodical way from a first beginning of generation up to an end, in which everything previously generated is resolved finally back into god. Fire is the basic element in a further special sense, as the first of the material elements to come into being by generation from god, while the other three elements

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this interpretation is controversial, I think that Zeus's body, as understood, at least, by Chrysippus, is not any form of fire at all, however "pure": Zeus is a body *sui generis*.)[25] It is Zeus's body's presence everywhere (as a body, but no material body), completely intermixed with matter, that makes possible the differentiations that he has imposed upon matter, through his contact everywhere, all the way down, so to speak, with matter. (Action from a distance is ruled out on Stoic physical principles.) By these means Zeus constitutes and sustains: first, the material elements themselves (with their specific differences); then particular, more complex types of different material stuffs; and, finally, the differentially organized bodies of the different kinds of material objects, including the plants, animals, and human beings, that the world-order contains.[26]

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are generated by god from that fire, by condensation of it first into air and then successively into water and earth. Thus, god, on Chrysippus's account, is not to be identified in any way or sense with the material element fire. (Most commentators, including Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, in their comments on the passages collected in chaps. 46 and 47, fail to see this.)

[25] See Philo, *On the Eternity [Indestructibility] of the World*, 90 (*SVF* 1.511, *LS* 46M): "[W]hen the world has been conflagrated (τὸν κόσμον ἐκπυρωθέντα) . . . it must change either into a flame (φλόξ) as Cleanthes thought, or into a flash of light (αὐγή), as did Chrysippus." On Philo's account, both Cleanthes and Chrysippus thought it necessary to avoid saying that the world was consumed *into* a fire (as Zeno seems to have done), since no fire survives the loss of its fuel, whereas, *ex hypothesi*, at the conflagration all fuel (in fact all other bodies besides Zeus) is done away with. See the whole context, secs. 85–93, *Philo*, trans. F. H. Colson, IX, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1941). Philo goes on to argue against both of these views, more successfully against Cleanthes' suggestion than against Chrysippus's. A flash of light may last for only a second, but it does not simply cease once its source goes out, and it is not located simply at that source. If at (or rather, after) the conflagration, when he is by himself (see n. 27), Zeus is, or is like, a flash of light—in effect a concentration of energy—then, even when he is spread through all matter, it is as that concentration of energy that he is spread. Chrysippus's idea that Zeus is, or is like, a flash of light is quite a compelling way of developing the original Zenonian theory of the conflagration (and correcting it, though Chrysippus would never have admitted that).

[26] In doing all this, Zeus first has to constitute a special basic sort of material stuff, called by the Stoics "breath" or *pneuma*. This is made of fire *and* air (the hot and the cold elements, respectively), with the result that *pneuma*'s nature is simultaneously to contract (as cold) and to expand (as hot). It is thus suited to work upon grosser kinds of material in such a way as to hold them together (by exercising its contractive, inward-turning power). At the same time (by exercising its expansive, outward-reaching power), it makes these materials capable of affecting other material bodies through contact with them. And, depending upon the degree of "tensility" in *pneuma* in its different locations, it can imbue things with their specific qualitative differentiations. Thus *pneuma* plays a very special role throughout Zeus's creative activity. It is important, however, not to confuse *pneuma* with Zeus himself. *Pneuma* is Zeus's essential, indispensable material tool. He remains a distinct body from, while spreading through, his tool, *pneuma*. Zeus and *pneuma* are both of them everywhere in the world, but only Zeus is the (ultimate) agent of what happens in the world. See the passages collected in Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 47B, D–I, O–Q. The Stoic theory of "through and through" mixture of distinct bodies (see Long and Sedley, chap. 48) was worked out so as to show how a body, such as Zeus, can be spread everywhere in some matter (in fact, in Zeus's case, in all of it), while *pneuma*, his material instrument, is equally spread everywhere through all the other forms of matter (and all material things). Since bodies are, all of them, divisible, all the way down, there can be in every portion of any material body some of god's body, as well as some *pneuma* (indeed *pneuma* in any number of different degrees and kinds of tension, so as to enable the composition and different characteristics of the bodily thing in question). Note that Aetius, in H. Diels, *Doxographi*

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As a rational being or rational nature, this nonmaterial body, Zeus, is a reasoned understanding of, and basis for, everything that it creates and sustains. A particular plant is what it is, and bears all the conceptual and other relations that it bears to other things of its own, and of other types, because of Zeus's thought in constituting it. Likewise for everything else that the world contains—stuffs, individual objects, whatever. I said above that the Stoics claim that human beings develop to maturity through their experience with the objects around them, and with those objects' properties, in such a way as to form, by natural, automatic, and nonvoluntary processes, concepts of those objects and properties. We can now see that the natural concepts that humans acquire through this process are simply crude, basic versions of those with which Zeus has worked in forming the relevant objects and properties in the first place. That is why these natural concepts are correct concepts, why they constitute knowledge, albeit of a crude and rough-and-ready kind. To have these concepts is to possess a share of Zeus's own concepts, the ones that he used, and uses, in creating, constituting, and sustaining the world in which human beings live and operate. Zeus, of course, has a vaster conception of what he is doing in creating and sustaining these objects and properties than we have when we acquire our basic concepts of them. His conception is even vaster than the more sophisticated knowledge that we could develop by further investigation and thought of our own. He understands each thing, and each kind of thing, and each property of a thing, in relation to every other thing, and every other kind of thing, and every other property. As a single mind that is responsible for the *whole* world, Zeus understands everything he does at any one place, and over any one period of time, in relation to everything else that he does everywhere else and in all other periods.

Because Zeus is a rational being, he does everything that he does for the sake of the good (and/or to avoid the bad) precisely like adult humans. According to Stoic theory, our good is *in fact* (whatever most people may misguidedly think) entirely a matter of how our minds are conditioned and how, as a result, they work. All externals are neither good nor bad, but at best preferable or not. So, also, for Zeus. The good that he is constantly seeking in everything he does is the good that consists in the thoughts that he thinks in doing it, and in their relations both to the other thoughts that he is thinking at the same time and to the thoughts that preceded and those that are to follow. It is a mistake to think, as perhaps readers of the Stoics have sometimes thought, that this good is the beauty and order of the resulting *material* world, or of its progress through time.

Graeci (Berlin: Reimer, 1879), 310, = *SVF* 2.340, trans. in Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 55G, says that for the Stoics, *all* causes are in fact "breaths" or *pneumata*. Thus, causal agency is always exercised through some *pneuma* belonging in one way or another to an agent.

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Zeus's thoughts are, indeed, all of them, thoughts about how to constitute and sustain, alter over time, destroy, and create material things of an enormous and interlocking variety. But the *good* that is constantly aimed at in this process is the goodness of the ordered thoughts—absolutely nothing else. Ultimately, this good is the totality of the history of Zeus's thoughts in governing the world from its first formation right through to its final dénouement in the so-called *conflagration*, when all matter is reabsorbed into Zeus's mind, and it, or he, is "all by himself"[27]—only then to restart the whole process, exactly as it happened before.

V. Zeus's Thoughts, Human Thoughts, and the Law of Nature

According to the Stoic theory, then, there are two kinds of rational beings—humans, and Zeus or nature—each constituted, *qua* rational, in exactly the same way.[28] Zeus thinks at each moment one huge, single thought: a thought about everything that he is doing then everywhere in the material world in constituting, sustaining, changing, moving from place to place, creating, or destroying things. Moreover, this thought is thought explicitly in relation to the preceding thoughts that he has thought in progression, all the way from the beginning. It is also thought in relation to all of the succeeding thoughts that he is going to think in succession right up to the conflagration. So, in another way, this single thought, the overall thought that Zeus thinks at each moment, is much more immense than even that first hugeness might seem to imply. It is, all at once, the whole succession of thoughts that constitute Zeus's life-history. The current thought (so to speak) is simply highlighted as the currently active and effective one in that series. Thus, Zeus's thought contains a correct, fully worked out concept of each and every kind of thing and each and every individual thing in the world. His thought also contains not only a correct account of what happens anywhere and to

[27] See Diogenes Laertius 7.136: κατ᾽ ἀρχὰς μὲν οὖν καθ᾽ αὑτὸν ὄντα. It should be observed that this passage, taken together with the Philo passage cited above in n. 25, shows that it is a mistake to say, as commentators often do (see, e.g., Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 1:278–79), that, for the Stoics, Zeus cannot in fact be "abstracted" from matter, but always exists as an internal principle within matter, forming it into material bodies. The sort of intelligent energy that Zeus is, in fact, is quite clearly conceived as being abstracted at the conflagration, or rather during the time between a conflagration (the end of the world) and the world's rebeginning. See also Diogenes Laertius 7.137: "god . . . at certain cycles of time absorbing into himself the whole of material substance and again generating it from himself" (θεόν . . . ὃς . . . κατὰ χρόνων ποιὰς περιόδους ἀναλίσκων εἰς ἑαυτὸν τὴν ἅπασαν οὐσίαν καὶ πάλιν ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ γεννῶν).

[28] I leave out of the account here and in what follows the important difference between human and Zeus's or nature's rationality, that (see the previous note) Zeus brings matter into existence, and does not merely, with his thoughts, shape, characterize, move, and change it. However, this power of initial creation (and destruction) of matter aside, Zeus's rationality is, as I say in the text, constituted exactly in the same way as human rationality.

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anything at any time in the world's history, but also a full knowledge of *why* it happens. The thought of whatever happens happening is needed as part of the overall history of thoughts constituting Zeus's history. The thought of it happening as and when it does has its point in, and explanation by, that thought's relation to prior thoughts and subsequent ones, as well as to other thoughts about other things happening at the same time. It is the overwhelmingly good order of the whole series, in all its internal relationships, that on Stoic theory, is identical with the good, so this current thought's place in the series is explained by its contribution to that overall good. Thus, Zeus's thought constitutes the totality of truth, as well as the good. Anything true is true because it (or the concept or thought of it) has its place in Zeus's mind, in his mental history; and that history is the embodiment of goodness.

Human beings, however, think special and different thoughts, depending upon the location of each one of them in the world, their particular experiences at the moment and before, or their expectations. Whereas Zeus's thought is the thought of the whole, any human being's thought is always a local thought. It is sometimes a thought about or toward the whole world, perhaps, but it is always from a single, localized point of view. What is any such individual to think, at any point in his or her history? Human thinking begins with an "impression" (a rational one, since we are rational minds) to some effect: that so and so.[29] We are constantly bombarded with such impressions, not only through and from the senses, but also from memory, anticipation, habits of past thinking, and built-up concepts (whether they are concepts arrived at naturally or through voluntary thought). No doubt, we are bombarded from other sources, too. Upon receiving these impressions, it is then up to each individual mind to exercise its judgment as to which of them to accept, to "assent" to, and which to reject, or, to suspend judgment over. Some of these will be impressions about some apparent matter of fact (perhaps something theoretical or, as we would say, something directly empirical). Others will be about what is good or bad to pursue or to do. Because of reason's inherent natural inclination to seek what is true and to avoid anything false, and to pursue what is good and to avoid everything bad, the two key questions for judgment are as follows. Is this *in fact* true (as it appears to be, as I am inclined to think)? Or is this *in fact* good (as it appears to be, as I am inclined to think)? I mentioned above (at the end of Section III) that there are standards and rules of "right reason" that we can invoke to help decide these questions. Ultimately, however, the standard is what Zeus himself thinks; he and the processes of his thought are definitive of what it is rational (i.e., correct by the standards of reason

[29] See Diogenes Laertius 7.49 (last sentence), 51 (last three sentences); Origen, *On Principles*, 3.1.3 (= *SVF* 2.988), trans. in part in *LS* 53A(4–5); and, in general, the materials collected in Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, chaps. 39 and 53.

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itself) to think. As Diogenes Laertius tells us (7.88), Zeus *is* right reason (ὁ ὀρθὸς λόγος).

In the passage where Diogenes Laertius tells us that Zeus is right reason, he also tells us that Zeus is "the law that is common to all things" (ὁ νόμος ὁ κοινός). Right reason, Diogenes says, is the same thing as this common law, Zeus being the "leader of the government of the things that have being" (καθηγεμόνι τούτῳ τῆς τῶν ὄντων διοικήσεως ὄντι), and the "things that have being" being all the bodies, material and nonmaterial, that make up the world. The law of Zeus, however, does not govern all of these bodies in exactly the same ways. Rational beings and their minds are governed by Zeus differently from the way in which he governs everything else. Plants, nonrational animals, and all material stuffs, whether existing on their own or constituting a living thing, are wholly and directly governed by Zeus's own thoughts. He has a "plan," as we have seen, consisting in an ordered series of thoughts that he thinks (and is going to think), and these thoughts produce and sustain all of the characteristics of all those things, bring them into existence, remove them from it, alter and develop them, and move them from place to place, in ways that we can observe happening, as well as in ways that we cannot. We can observe the effects of Zeus's "law," or nature's "law," in the behavior of the material bodies themselves. The nature of wood is such that when it comes into contact with a hot fire it burns, invariably, while the nature of stone is such that when it comes into contact with fire it merely (and invariably) heats up, even to a very high degree. The nature of the different metals is such that, depending on the specific metal and the size and intensity of the fire, in some cases a metal gets soft, or even actually melts. Similarly, mutatis mutandis, nature's "law" governs the behavior of the different nonrational animals: but in these cases the relevant "laws" are vastly more complex, encompassing as they do a variety of different behaviors, species by species, in response to different stimuli.

Nowadays, when we speak of laws of nature, we do so with reference to empirical generalizations like those about wood, stone, and metals that I have just mentioned, backed up, no doubt, by much theory about the behavior of molecules and particles; but that theory is itself based on further empirically supported hypotheses about how molecules and particles behave under varying conditions. It is of crucial importance in understanding the Stoic theory of natural law to realize that, for the Stoics, the law or laws of nature consist not in such empirical generalizations, but rather in the thoughts of Zeus which lie behind and cause the behaviors of material things. It may be, and presumably is the case, that the best that we humans can do in order to grasp Zeus's law, so far as it applies to the things that I have so far been talking about, is by way of observation of the behavior of material bodies and the derivation, by that means, of empirical generalizations. However, even so, no statement about how material bodies behave, drawn up in that empirical way, in itself

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expresses any part of Zeus's or nature's law for them. His (or nature's) law consists in the rational determination to think whatever thought he (or nature) is going to think in causing the bodies to behave in the ways that we may (or may not) observe them to behave. And that determination is grounded in Zeus's (or nature's) conception of what thoughts, and what combination of thoughts, will constitute the best and most beautiful rational order of thoughts over the whole period of the world-order's existence and development. The fact that, as it seems, we can observe many differences in the behavior of different sorts of things, and invariances in those behaviors, shows that one part of this self-determination on Zeus's part is a determination to operate in a vast and interlocking set of widely differentiated, but in each case universally applied and invariant, ways. To operate in this way is part of the rational order that he (or nature) achieves, or, rather, it is its direct effect.

How, then, does Zeus's law govern rational beings and their minds? The first thing to notice is that in many respects the behaviors of our bodies (in the use of the term "body" that contrasts with "mind") are governed no differently from that of other material bodies. If rain falls on my head, then my hair and skin are affected in relevantly precisely similar ways to that of any animal or any nonanimate thing that is also rained on. Similarly, if I eat something, what then follows in my body proceeds in ways similar to what follows when a nonrational animal eats something. Zeus's thought is just as directly responsible for all of such processes in the human case as in the nonhuman, and in just the same ways. However, the second example, that of eating something, differs in the human case in one very important respect from the case of the nonrational animal: with the animal, Zeus's thought is just as directly the cause, and in precisely the same way, both of the animal's getting the sense-impressions that it gets (that lead it to obtain the item) and of its then eating it, as it is in causing the consequences in the animal's body. As the Stoics put it, the animal's "impulse" to eat, which is triggered by the impression (together with its soul's nature and condition), is caused by Zeus having a thought, following in due order on the thoughts of his that were involved in giving the animal the particular impression that it got. (So, too, and in exactly the same way, the impression itself, the nature of the animal's soul, and its condition at the time, are caused by Zeus's thoughts.) The "impulse" that is the animal's response to the impression and the immediate cause of the animal's action of eating, follows automatically upon the receipt of the impression.[30] The human case is different.

[30] The sources leave it rather unclear in just what way an animal impulse does follow automatically upon receipt of the impression. Some sources speak of some counterpart in animals (at least some animals), of that "assent" which is necessary before a rational impulse (i.e., an adult human being's impulse) can be formed. See R. W. Sharples, *Alexander of Aphrodisias On Fate* (London: Duckworth, 1983), chaps. 13–14 (relevant passages are collected in *SVF* 2.979–81, esp. 285 lines 37–38, 286 lines 7–8); see also Nemesius *De natura*

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Human beings, when they act (act voluntarily, I mean), do so because of reasons that they see for doing so. They may reach out and start to eat something immediately upon getting the impression of it as a good thing to eat, and without any apparent process of thinking and deciding whether to eat it, or what else to do instead. But, nonetheless, it simply belongs to their nature as *rational* beings that they always act—even in such cases of unreflective, virtually "automatic," action—for what they take, at the time of acting, to be good reasons for doing what they do. It belongs to their nature to act always and only on some thought of their own (when they do really *act*, i.e., act voluntarily), to the effect that this act is a good thing to do, that there is good reason to do it. Human beings cannot *not* do this, if they act in any way at all (even if they simply refrain from acting). If and when they have no thought at all of any reason to do anything, they merely stay inertly where they are, or get moved about by outside forces (or internal ones)—in either case, forces coming from Zeus's thoughts. Their thought is the direct cause of their action, just as Zeus's thoughts are the direct cause of the corresponding happenings in those other cases. So, one way that Zeus governs human beings is by sustaining them in existence as rational beings, as beings that produce some of their behavior (that which is, as we put it, voluntary) from their *own* thoughts about what is best to do—not from *his*, as is the case with the behavior of animals and every other thing that the world contains. In fact, as I will explain (or, at least, maintain), this is the only way, the only respect at all, in which Zeus directly governs this part of any human being's behavior. (A human's self-governance by calling upon standards of rational behavior that derive ultimately from Zeus's thought is another matter altogether. On this point see Section VI, which follows.) Zeus's thought or intention in making rational beings part of his world—the world that he animates—is to make there be beings who are located in specific places and times and who possess a localized outlook on the rest of the world, which will then act in accordance with their own reasoned views (not necessarily with Zeus's). Accordingly, the causality of Zeus's thought in relation to them (insofar as they are behaving *qua* rational beings) is limited simply to making and sustaining them in existence as rational beings of this sort. Beyond that, they exercise the causality of their own thought through the power of that thought itself, exactly as Zeus causes everything that he causes through the power of his own much more powerful thought. (I leave aside here, as before, the important difference

hominis, cited in *SVF* 2.991 and *LS* 53 passage O. This does seem to make sense of the fact that animals can learn to double-check something before proceeding to action; they do not always act immediately upon becoming aware of something that is apparently tasty to eat and that is within their range. In any case, with nonrational animals the Stoics seem to have thought that, even if something like an assent to an impression is needed before an impulse can take shape in the animal's soul, the assent, too, is generated automatically upon receipt of (the right sort of) impression. This is not so with rational animals, i.e., humans.

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between Zeus's and our causality, namely, that Zeus's includes the power to bring matter into existence and to destroy it by absorbing it into himself at the conflagration.)

VI. How Rational Beings, as Such, Follow Zeus's Law

It is by Zeus's (nature's) law that we are created and sustained as rational beings, with this particular set of natural powers and under these particular constraints. This is one aspect of how Zeus's (nature's) law applies to human beings, *qua* rational. However, Zeus's law applies in a second way as well. In deciding what to think, and especially in deciding how to behave (voluntarily), as our nature compels us to do, Zeus's law is authoritative for human beings in a second, purely normative way. Since the law in question applies specifically to our voluntary behavior, we need to take into account Stoic views on the scope and limitations of that behavior, before we can turn to see what the content of this law might be, and how we can come to know it, as well as from what its authority for us derives.

Since any human being's reason is, of course, located entirely within his or her own body,[31] we can exercise our mind's powers, in the first instance and directly, only on our own bodies. Our mind has direct contact only with our own body, and for anything to affect anything else, according to Stoic theory, direct contact is required.[32] In fact, strictly speaking, according to Chrysippus, the whole of any action (even one like walking) consists simply and entirely in that certain condition of the so-called "leading" or "commanding part" of the soul, the ἡγεμονικόν, that is, the mind, which results when one decides to walk, or, rather, which is constituted by that decision.[33] What follows upon the decision

[31] For Chrysippus and other Stoics, the human soul is a sort of high-quality breath spread throughout the body. Impulse, the direct cause of action, takes place in the "commanding part" of the soul, the part where reason is lodged or, anyhow, where acts of reasoning take place, i.e., in the heart. From there the breath that is the first and immediate material body that reason uses as its tool spreads throughout the body—to all the sense organs, nerves, and muscles. (See Calcidius, *Commentary on the Timaeus*, cited in *SVF* 2.879 and trans., in part, in *LS* 53G, quoting Chrysippus in Latin.) Thus, our reason can have its effects everywhere in us, even though it is concentrated in the "commanding part" residing in the heart.

[32] See Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle's Categories*, ed. K. Kalbfleisch, *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, vol. 8 (Berlin: Reimer, 1907), 302.29–35 (= *SVF* 2.342, in part).

[33] See *Seneca* VI, *Epistles* 93–124, ed. and trans. R. M. Gummere, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), 113.23. Seneca reports that Cleanthes held a different view, viz., that the action, e.g., of walking was the soul-breath extending from the commanding part out to where the bodily movement itself would begin, when that breath is in the condition for initiating that movement. It seems that Chrysippus intended to correct Cleanthes, in adopting the position that an action is strictly the commanding part itself, when in the relevant condition. Presumably, his reason was that our mind does not even control directly and without possibility of slip-up or interference the state of the breath extending out from itself to the muscles and limbs. The commanding part, like all the parts of the soul, is indeed a material body, some breath stationed in the heart, but our reason (itself a body, as noted above, but not a material one) is lodged in the breath of the com-

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052503202016 Published online by Cambridge University Press

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052503202016 Published online by Cambridge University Press

then, if conditions are normal—for example, the flexing of muscles and all the rest that goes on inside the body, and then the motions of the limbs and the progress of the whole body across some space—are not part of the action itself. They are its consequences and effects (wholly intended, of course). For those things to take place, the body itself must be of a certain nature and condition; and for that Zeus is, at least primarily, responsible. (Some aspects of one's relevant bodily condition could, of course, have resulted from prior voluntary decisions and actions of one's own, not from Zeus's thoughts in constituting our bodies and in maintaining them, or causing them gradually to change, or even to deteriorate. But, obviously, Zeus's direct causality is paramount, so far as the required condition of the relevant parts of our bodies is concerned.) This means that, in principle, I can only have any effects in the outer world, and indeed within my own body (except in my mind), provided that Zeus does not block me. He could block me by changing my muscles and limbs, so that when I decide to walk (and, according to Chrysippus' stipulation, do walk), the muscles do not flex, or the limbs do not move, or whatever. In that case, my intentions would only get carried out so far as the action that consists in that decision itself goes, and no movement across space takes place. However, we know that Zeus cannot cause any such failure by any kind of simple fiat or miracle: the orderliness of his thought requires a regularity and invariance that would be grossly violated by any such interference on his part. So, normally, and absent some unexpected, but ultimately perfectly natural, sudden disability, I *can* control my muscles and limbs at will, and I *can* get myself to where I want to go (provided, again, that no outside force, whether another person's action and its consequences, or external natural events under the direct control of Zeus's lawlike thought, blocks me). Thus, it is part of what Zeus has done in creating us as rational animals that this degree of control normally does hold for us. His plan was to make there be rational beings who would take care of their own lives and their own affairs on the basis of their own rational understandings.[34]

manding part in such a way as always to be able, immediately and without slip or any possible interference, to have the necessary effects on that breath for its decisions to count as precisely the decisions that they are (and not just some free-floating phantasies, unconnected to any possible results). For your reason *not* to be able to cause at least these effects, perhaps because of some sudden defect in the breath of the commanding part, is for you literally to lose your mind.

[34] See Diogenes Laertius 7.86: nature regulates (οἰκονομεῖ) the lives of plants, the other animals, and human beings as well, but in different ways. Animals have "impulse" added to plants' vegetative capacities, so as to be able to go on their own toward things that suit them (food, for example), while "reason is given to rational animals by way of a more perfect kind of management . . . ; for reason is added as the craftsman of impulse" (τοῦ δὲ λόγου τοῖς λογικοῖς κατὰ τελειοτέραν προστασίαν δεδομένου . . . τεχνίτης γὰρ οὗτος ἐπιγίνεται τῆς ὁρμῆς).

In order to make possible such rational beings, it was necessary for Zeus to arrange the order of his own thoughts in such a way that this degree of control by agents on the relevant movements of their internal organs and their outer limbs, is maintained (for the most part, in any event). It is at this point in our analysis that the second, or normative, aspect of Zeus's or nature's law for rational beings, which I mentioned at the beginning of this section, comes in. What does reason demand, or permit, of us in developing our own rational understandings of what to do, and in conducting our individual (and our communal) lives on that basis? As I mentioned above (Section V, first two paragraphs), the standards and norms of reason are directly exhibited in, indeed, are ultimately constituted by, Zeus's or nature's own thinking. Zeus and nature *are* "right reason." One way of posing the question that I just asked, therefore, is to ask, What does Zeus, or universal reason, think that we should do—what, in other words, does it wish us to do? This is what it is right for us to do, what reason (in us, too) declares that we ought to do, and what it is best for us to do. In general terms the answer is clear. Zeus and nature wish us to think, in each circumstance, whatever thought on our part would most perfectly cohere with all of the prior and all of the future thoughts that constitute the (rest of the) history of thoughts that is universal reason's, or Zeus's, own life. But these terms are too general for them to be of any use to us.[35]

More concretely—and this seems to be how the Stoics went about answering this question[36]—we can bear in mind that we are individual animals, living a special sort of life for an animal (one directed by our own individual powers of reasoning), but, nonetheless, an *animal's* life. So we can examine how nature, or Zeus, directly governs the lives of all of the vastly diverse creatures who, not being rational themselves, live by such direct governance. If, once we reach the "age of reason," we are now to take over, with our own minds, our own governance, then surely we ought to follow the patterns of life that we see the nonrational animals following, so far as, given our other differences from them, these patterns apply rel-

[35] Indeed, understood one way, this turns out to be a trivial and totally useless answer. If one takes into account (see Section VII below) that human decisions and other thoughts are actually part of the history of Zeus's mind (since human minds are "disjoined portions" of Zeus's), whatever decision or other thought a person, in fact, does have at any moment is the one that most perfectly coheres with the rest of the series. Recall that, in Stoic theory, the total history of Zeus's thoughts is the most perfectly ordered one imaginable, or even conceivable. Understood in this way, this answer, therefore, would tell us simply to decide, do, and think on any occasion whatever we are, in fact, going to decide, do, or think. I intend the answer differently. We are to understand it as directing us to consider what action of our own would fit in best with the ways that Zeus or nature itself, in directing the progress of the parts of the world that are under its direct control (i.e., everything that is not the direct consequence of any human decision), does direct. We look to patterns or norms of rationality that are found in nature's own actions to discover norms for our own human decision-making.

[36] See my exposition in Cooper and Procopé, *Seneca: Moral and Political Essays*, xxi–xxiv.

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https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052503202016 Published online by Cambridge University Press

evantly to us. Zeus's or nature's law for us must be some parallel to, or reasonable extension from, what we can observe as his (or its) law for other animals' lives. Consistency and coherence in Zeus's thinking about us, as animals, seems clearly to require this. In this way, the Stoics think, we can arrive at a large set of conditions and outcomes for ourselves that we can declare "preferred" ones, in that they give us good reason to pursue them, or to seek to maintain them so far as we can, and to avoid their "rejected" opposites. These preferred conditions and outcomes (or values) include health, continued life, all the attributes of a well-developed physical condition, warm and supportive relations in family life and with friends, loyalty, supportive social relations with all with whom we come in contact, the improvement of our own intellectual capacities generally, and the sense of ourselves as part of local, as well as wider, human communities, whose needs and interests thereby become needs and interests of our own. It will be rational, as we are struck by various "impulsive" impressions during our daily lives, to evaluate these impressions, in deciding what to do, by appeal to these preferred values. In general, if you pursued these values, then the sort of life that you would want to, and try to, live would be a well-balanced and well-integrated one, with a full involvement in the life of the community and some appropriate productive work. So part of Zeus's law for us is to live that way, to the extent that external circumstances can be made to permit us to do it.

Additional guides toward what it is rational to think and to do can be derived from the stock of natural concepts that all of us obtain during the time when we are growing up, as part of our natural endowment as rational beings, and that are available to us once we reach the "age of reason" (see Section III above). Most important, here, is the concept of goodness, since, as I mentioned (end of Section III), every action expresses an implicit or explicit decision to act that way, grounded in some thought that something or other is good, either to do or to get, or is bad and so is to be avoided. As I mentioned (Section III, next to last paragraph), most people spend their entire lives constantly misapplying and really grossly misunderstanding their own concept of the good, since according to that concept, what it is to be good is to be rationally well-ordered—something that ultimately can only apply to acts of thinking, or rather, to trains of thought. Nonetheless, unless one does come to understand explicitly and self-consciously that this in fact is what goodness consists in, then one is failing to use one's naturally acquired rationality in a way that conforms correctly to its own inherent standards of thought. Thus, it is part of nature's or Zeus's law that we should understand goodness in this way, and, therefore, should never regard mere conditions of our bodies, passive states of our minds, or any external condition or outcome, whether of our action or produced in some other way, as either good or bad for us. Only our own thoughts, when they are appropriately well ordered—and of course Zeus's thought, always and in general—are good things.

Now, according to Stoic theory, if we accept the norms for decision-making and behavior adumbrated in the previous two paragraphs, and live fully according to them, then we will not only be living fully rationally, we will also be living as fully virtuous persons. We will govern our lives by the concrete values that were partially listed above: our own health, physical well-being, continued life, productive work, warm and supportive relations in family life and with friends, loyalty, cooperative social relations with all with whom we come in contact, a sense for the values of community, both immediate and wider, and so on. We will do so with the full recognition that none of these values can correctly be thought of as anything good, nor are their opposites bad. The only good that is available in human life is the orderly thinking and deciding that occur in the assiduous pursuit and maintenance of these values, while recognizing that their attainment, always and inevitably, also depends partly on what happens outside oneself and outside one's own control. In particular, their attainment depends upon Zeus's own decisions in maintaining a course of external events (and, for that matter, events internal to our own bodies too) into which our own efforts fit, so as to lead to our desired outcomes. These outcomes may be, and are, authorized by universal reason as the appropriate and correct ones for us to pursue, but this does not mean—and if we are virtuous we will always bear this vividly in mind—that Zeus's actual thoughts, in determining actual outcomes, will necessarily, on any particular occasion, lead to their fruition. If they do not eventuate, then we know (retrospectively, in the only way that we with our limited knowledge *can* know) not only that it was not meant to be, but also that it is in fact better that it did not happen. Its not happening was in fact the direct result of Zeus's maximally well-ordered, fully coherent thought-history—the very embodiment of goodness. The Stoics argue, with considerable plausibility, that if we live like this, then we will be exhibiting, in our ways of thought and in our behavior, justice, temperance, loyalty, honesty, courage, industriousness, love and respect for humanity, and all the rest of those socially approved traits of character that are traditionally regarded as human virtues (however limited and inadequate traditional conceptions of their nature and requirements might be).

VII. Autonomy and Freedom of Choice: Conclusion

In sum, if we live in consistency with nature, that is to say, fully rationally, we will be living in accordance with norms, established by nature's or Zeus's law, of "preferability" and "rejectability," on the one hand, and goodness on the other. As a result, we will be living fully virtuous lives. I take it that when Dio of Prusa says in his oration *On Freedom* (sec. 5, cited above, Section II), that the law of nature or Zeus's law, though open to view (φανερόν), is neither seen by most people nor made by them the leader of their lives (οὔτε ὁρῶσιν οὔτε ἡγεμόνα ποιοῦνται τοῦ βίου), it is this second aspect of Zeus's law that Dio has in mind. This aspect con-

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cerns, specifically, the norms established in nature for our own decisions and actions, as I just explained. My analysis has now put us in a position to see why he is correct, as a matter of Stoic theory, even if not of standard or official Stoic terminology, to describe this law as *our* law—our law for ourselves, as well as Zeus's law for us. Hence, by following this law we achieve autonomy. This law is Zeus's law for us only because it is reason's law: Zeus's lawgiving authority is, or derives from, the authority of reason, which is identical, according to Stoic theory, to Zeus. And because, as I have explained, our own being as agents is wholly constituted by our rationality, this same law is thereby our own law, delivered by our own rational nature—by ourselves as we are in our essence—to ourselves as agents. Only if we live in full accordance with this law do we measure up to the law to which our own nature, as rational, makes us answerable. To the extent that we fail to measure up in our lives to this law—however much we are ourselves, and necessarily, the source of our interest in the modes of behavior or objects of pursuit that we adopt for ourselves in lieu of the law's authority—we are living, as Dio puts it, in a self-inflicted, grievous slavery that is forbidden by the law (τῆς χαλεπῆς καὶ παρανόμου δουλείας ἐν ᾗ ζεύξαντες αὑτοὺς ἔχετε, sec. 7). In this slavery, we misguidedly, arbitrarily, and pointlessly set up for ourselves interests and desires, and whole ways of life, that then dominate *us*—when we could and ought to be ruling ourselves by our own law.

It is obvious that this ancient conception of autonomy differs greatly from the familiar Kantian conception that has been, and still is, so influential in modern and contemporary thinking. The self-imposed law of Stoic autonomy is much more comprehensive in its requirements than the Kantian categorical imperative. The Stoic law gives directives for all kinds of personal and private matters, as well as for more public and communal ones. Furthermore, it makes no provision for finite rational beings as possessing the dignity of authoritative setters of their own ends (and derivatively also for others), within the limits of this basic categorical law. Under Stoic autonomy, ends are set for us by (universal) reason itself, never by the arbitrary pleasures and preferences of individuals among us. These and other differences, I think, all stem directly from the difference between Kant's and the Stoics' conceptions of the nature of reason and rationality itself. For Kant, reason is essentially something formal, a matter of logical consistency in one's reasoning from given premises to appropriate conclusions, and of the most abstract, universal principles for the organization of experience. For the Stoics, as I explained (Section III), reason's formal aspects are, at most, the outer surface of something with a rich and deep substance of its own—it is a whole system of concepts that constitute a basic knowledge of the world and our place in it. This difference in the understanding of reason and rationality is, in fact, a central and fundamental difference between the whole tradition of ancient philosophy and that of modern, post–Renaissance thought.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052503202016 Published online by Cambridge University Press

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052503202016 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Nonetheless, there are important resemblances and, no doubt, also historical connections between the two conceptions of autonomy, Kantian and Stoic. (As I indicated at the outset of this essay, however, I make no claims about, and will not explore here, any of the history that might connect them.) First of all, unlike many current conceptions of autonomy, both Kant and Dio (on behalf of the Stoics) understand autonomy in strict accordance with its etymology, as involving being subject to and consistently following *law(s)* (νόμοι) of one's own making. For Kant and Dio, autonomy is not mere self-direction or self-governance, which might, of course, be quite arbitrary, unprincipled, and inconsistent. Secondly, in both theories the inner source of this law is conceived of as reason itself—in particular, reason as something with universal or universalizing scope. And thirdly, the law of autonomy, in both cases, is centrally conceived as the basis of morality (duty, virtue). To be sure, within each of these three common aspects of Stoic and Kantian autonomy there are very important differences, as I indicated above, but these broad similarities are very striking.

I conclude with some brief comments on one difficulty that the Stoics faced if they were to develop and defend their conception of autonomy adequately—a difficulty with which, though again in different ways, Kant had to contend as well. In both theories, the freedom given by autonomy is not at all the same as the mere freedom of free choice—the freedom required by agents' responsibility for their choices and actions. But it does seem to be a requirement on any acceptable conception of autonomy that autonomous agents also possess, and exercise in their autonomous acts, that lesser freedom. As is well known, Kant struggled mightily in his works of moral philosophy subsequent to the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) to work out theories of these two sorts of freedom which would allow not only autonomous agents, but also those who live "heteronomously" and flout the moral law, to retain the freedom of free choice and responsibility.[37] For the Stoics, the difficulty arose immediately and in a very severe form because of their doctrine of Fate. This is the doctrine, roughly, that everything that happens at any time anywhere in the world happens through the determination of Zeus's thought, as part of his overall plan, and conceived in some way or sense in advance of the coming to be of the world-order—a plan that extends into the smallest detail, however trivial, of every circumstance and event.[38] The Stoic theory of human action seems vulnerable, or worse, because of the way that it at-

[37] There are many translations of the *Groundwork*; it is conveniently available in the volume *Immanuel Kant's Writings on Practical Philosophy* in the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, trans. and ed. Mary J. Gregor, with a general introduction by Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). In his effort in the *Groundwork*, chap. III, to establish the authority for us of the categorical imperative, Kant developed an argument that had the implication that free will itself was only exercisable if one followed that imperative.

[38] Some of the most important ancient reports on this Stoic doctrine are collected in Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, chap. 55 (see especially the passages at 55J through 55S).

tempts to combine freedom, and, thus, responsibility, with a global determinism by Fate. Critics of the Stoics, from ancient times onward, have found this a particularly difficult combination to sustain.[39] If Fate (equivalent to Zeus's thought) determines everything, does it not then determine our own thinking too, in some way, however much the Stoics might have tried to deny it, in maintaining our own responsibility for what we think and what we decide to do? In that case, how can we be meaningfully held to be responsible for our own thought and action—to think and act freely, even if and when we act (allegedly) autonomously?

In the debates over the relationship between Fate and individuals' responsibility for their own thought and action, one crucial point seems to me to be overlooked, or, at least, its significance is missed. It is here, as it seems to me, that the best Stoic response—an entirely adequate one—is to be found to these difficult questions: according to Stoic theory, our individual minds are held to be actual, disjoined *portions* of Zeus's mind.[40] So when the Stoics speak of Zeus's universal causality (i.e., Fate), this cannot threaten to remove the possibility of our own causality, or our own responsibility. Our causality is part of Zeus's. This causality is simply that which belongs to mind or minds as such. Minds just *do* have the power to act upon (suitable) materials with which they come into contact, and, ultimately, as we have seen, only minds, through the *pneuma* with which they are mixed, have this power. It is our privilege, as rational animals whose minds are portions of Zeus's, to share with Zeus in the government of the world. Most of what happens, he (or nature) causes directly through his (its) own rational substance, or rather, through the part of it that is not separated off in the form of human minds. But the rest of what happens is caused by our own thoughts and decisions. As I explained

[39] Thus, in introducing Chrysippus's effort to "mediate" between the old determinists who simply, on the basis of fate, declared human actions to be necessitated and so not "free," and those who (like Epicurus) exempted movements of the mind from control by fate in order to preserve freedom, Cicero says that, although Chrysippus *wanted* to establish a view of human freedom that would make it compatible with universal determinism, he employed terminology of his own devising that got him into such difficulty that, against his will, he actually ended up lending support to the old determinists' position: see *De Fato*, trans. H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942), sec. 39; see also sec. 20. Alexander of Aphrodisias (in his treatise *On Fate*, ed. Sharples, chap. 27), argues at length that, in fact, people can be legitimately subject to praise or blame for their actions (i.e., are responsible for them) only if—as the Stoics deny—they had the "liberty of indifference" in deciding to do them. In other words, they can be held responsible only if at that time they could either do or not do what they did.

[40] "Disjoined portion" here translates ἀπόσπασμα, D. L. 7.143; see also Epictetus, *Discourses* (trans. W. A. Oldfather, 1.1.12): speaking in Zeus's voice, Epictetus says that Zeus gives each of us μέρος τι ἡμέτερον, a part of himself. This Greek word is often translated, e.g., by Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 1:319 (53 X), as "offshoot." But in the literal sense an offshoot can be a branch running off from a main stem to which it remains connected, while the Greek verb from which the noun is derived means to tear off or away, to detach. If we think of ourselves as "offshoots," it must be in the other meaning of the literal sense of this word, where "offshoots" refers to something cut off from a stem and planted on its own. Hence, to render this Stoic idea, I prefer the less elegant "disjoined portion" to the potentially misleading "offshoot."

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above (Section V), it is entirely up to us what we shall think in reaction to the impressions that we receive; what we will think depends entirely upon what we find it reasonable to think in the light of our impressions. Nor does Zeus play any role in determining what we *will* find reasonable to think; he gives us minds that are adequate to the task of figuring out correctly what really *is* most reasonable, but it is then up to us to use that power as we think best.

Thus, since our minds are portions of Zeus's, the total history of the world's thoughts, which is the history of Zeus's thoughts, actually includes our thoughts, and thereby, of course, their effects, as part of its own course. The amazing thing is that even with all of our individual errors, the total ordered sequence of thoughts (our thoughts, plus Zeus's on his own) that cause all of the objects and happenings in the course of world history displays the most perfect rational order that there could possibly be. (Part, of course, of the beautiful orderliness of that history is due to, or consists in, the fact that it is the result of the contributions of a huge number of distinct minds, Zeus's plus each of our own. Each of us thinks according to our own ideas of what is best in light of the impressions that we receive.) This most perfect rational order happens, however, hardly at all through human effort to bring it about—most of us have no such intention, even no such idea at all. The rational order is brought about almost entirely by the power that Zeus has on his own, apart from human minds, to anticipate and plan the whole course of his own life, while allowing each of us at each moment to make up our own minds about what to think and what to do, and, thus, allowing us to contribute those parts of the sequence of his ideas. In planning his total life, he anticipates what each of us will think and decide at every moment in relation to the impressions that we will experience then, and, in advance as it were (from the very beginning), he adjusts the rest of his thoughts to accommodate our own into an overall magnificently well-ordered total history of thought—a history that is inconceivably beautiful and good. In this way, whether or not in our own decisions we do follow Zeus's (or nature's) law, and so whether or not we live autonomously, we nonetheless live with full personal responsibility for all of our own thoughts and all of our actions. We are exactly as responsible for our thoughts, and in exactly the same way, as Zeus himself is responsible for his own thoughts (or rather, for that part of his thoughts that he thinks in separation from us).[41]

[41] Here again I leave aside, as irrelevant to what I am saying, the fact that Zeus, in the portion of his thought that lies apart from what human minds contribute, possesses the power actually to bring matter into existence. Zeus's mind is, indeed, in this way as in others, vastly more powerful than our minds are, but in thinking whatever thoughts we do think, we are just as free, in the sense of responsible, for what we do as Zeus is in thinking his own thoughts.

My remarks in this paragraph are the briefest sketch of part of what, I recognize, is a controversial interpretation of the Stoic theory of Fate and human beings' individual responsibility for their actions—an extraordinarily complex and difficult topic. I hope to present and argue fully for that interpretation on another occasion.

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Stoic autonomy, then, is a complex and, I think, deeply interesting conception of human nature, human rationality, and the basis of morality. In the similarities of autonomy, as they conceive it, to Kant's much more familiar conception, the Stoics deserve to be considered important forerunners of Kant, neglected though they are in this capacity. But, independently of historical comparison, the Stoic theory deserves to be studied and appreciated in its own right.

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