

Stoic Cosmopolitanism and Ideal Deliberation

We tend to take it for granted that moral philosophy is, at least in part, concerned with how we should interact with others, and what we owe to them. Indeed, it is one possible and minimal way to understand the word ‘moral’ in expressions such as ‘moral duties’, ‘moral values’, or ‘moral reasons’, that morality, most generally speaking, has something to do with *others*, and how we should interact with them. It has of course been noted that ancient ethics is not well described as moral philosophy. Ethics in the ancient sense, it has been said, is concerned with questions of how one wants to live one’s life, whereas moral philosophy (or the normative part thereof) is concerned with what one should be doing.¹ However, even if we take a strict line on this issue, and insist that the ancients really have no notion of morality—no conception of *moral* as opposed to other values, *moral* as opposed to other reasons, and so on—it does not yet follow that ethics is

¹ The ancient project is usually characterized as addressing the question “How should I live?”, or “How should one live?” (and with respect to communities, “How should we live?”). However, I think that the *starting-point* of ethical thought in antiquity is more accurately captured by the question “How do I want to live?”. Engagement with this question can then lead to the idea that one *should* want to live in a certain way, and this can be taken to mean that one should live in a certain way.—Scholars and ethicists disagree on whether we should emphasize the difference between ancient ethics and moral philosophy, or whether we should regard ancient ethics as a kind of moral philosophy. In this paper, I do not propose a general argument for either view. But it should become clear from my discussion of the Stoics that I view the difference as significant. In fact, I think it is a philosophically worthwhile project to see whether we can formulate a compelling theory about how one should live and interact with others *without* reference to a special category of moral values, moral reasons, or ‘moral shoulds’.

concerned solely with the agent herself.² Questions of how one wants to lead one's life seem to naturally include interaction with others. A well-lived life involves living with other people. It seems therefore obvious that ethics should have something to say about our life with others. This might include a number of questions—for example, how we should see others, and how their concerns ought to matter to our deliberations.

It is a strong intuition of the Judeo-Christian tradition, as well as of most modern and contemporary ethical theories, that first and foremost, we should view others as bearers of value. More particularly, we should see them as bearers of a very special kind of value: value beyond prize, as the Kantian and Biblical tradition has it. It is in response to this value that we should interact with each other in such-and-such ways.

Stoic ethics and political philosophy is remarkably different. Surprisingly, it is not easy to see whether the Stoics have anything at all to say about our interactions with others.³ But of course, if they did not, their views could not plausibly be described as cosmopolitanist,

² A precise statement of this view would have to identify the Roman authors as the earliest transitional authors. In my view, Cicero more than anyone else contributes to this shift—he translates 'appropriate action' as 'duty', thinks that self-interest can be in conflict with the '*honestum*', and so on. None of these ideas can be found in ancient Greek ethics, or other Latin authors like Seneca, who are more closely adhering to earlier thought.

³ Rachel Barney describes how puzzling this is in "A Puzzle in Stoic Ethics," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 24 (2003), 303–340. Micheal Frede discusses this difficulty in "On the Stoic Conception of the Good," in: K. Ierodiakonou (ed.), *Topics in Stoic Philosophy* (Oxford 2001), 71–94. Note further that the notion of justice is not at all central to Stoic political philosophy.

as they traditionally have been.⁴ Even worse, the Stoic views could also not be described as any kind of ethical or political theory.

In this paper, I try to characterize the particular nature of Stoic cosmopolitanism via the question of how *others* and the *concerns of others* matter to the ideal agent's reasoning. Ideal deliberation, as the Stoics conceive of it, takes the concerns of all others into account. However, the Stoic conception is in a deep sense different from more familiar, modern theories. In Stoic cosmopolitanism, human beings are not viewed as bearers of value. Rather, they are conceived of as related parts of the universe. Others belong to us, and insofar as they are recognized as fellow-parts of one whole, their concerns matter to us.

1. The Concerns of Others

Here's a first, and not obviously false way of describing ideal reasoning, as the Stoics conceive of it:

Ideal Deliberation 1: The ideal agent perfectly selects and deselects things of value and disvalue.

⁴ Some important publications are: Gisela Striker, "Origins of the Concept of Natural Law," *Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 2 (1987), 79-94, reprinted in *Papers in Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics* (Cambridge 1996), 209-220; Malcolm Schofield, *The Stoic Idea of the City*, with a foreword by Martha Nussbaum (Chicago 1999); Martha Nussbaum's introduction to Schofield's book, as well as a number of later publications by Nussbaum on the Stoics, have been particularly influential; Dirk Obbink, "The Stoic Sage in the Cosmic City," in: Ierodiakonou (ed.), *Topics in Stoic Philosophy*, 178-195.

According to the Stoics, health, wealth, life, functioning cognitive faculties, and so on, are in agreement with nature. This means: a human life that is lived with one's cognitive faculties intact, with one's body functioning well, a certain amount of wealth, and so on, is the kind of life which it is natural for human beings to lead. Therefore, reason prefers to have these things, and, accordingly, the Stoics call them preferred things. However, they call them preferred *indifferents*, thereby indicating that these things are not *goods*. Rather than being good, these things have *value*. Their opposites—illness, impediments of one's cognitive faculties, death, poverty, and so on—are contrary to nature; they are dispreferred indifferents; they have disvalue.

The things of value and disvalue are the *material* of deliberation. The perfect agent deliberates perfectly with respect *to them*. Perfect selection and deselection of indifferents—which is what I shall call perfect deliberation—constitutes virtue.⁵ A brief word on terminology. The Stoics do not have a term for 'deliberation'; strictly speaking, we should render their theory by speaking about the agent's reasoning. Unlike Aristotle, the Stoics do not distinguish between practical and theoretical reason, and accordingly they do not coin terms of art for the kind of reasoning that leads up to action. For them, agents accept and reject impressions. Such impressions might be of rather different kinds, for example, "today it is raining," "when it rains, one should take an umbrella," "not

⁵ Tad Brennan discusses a number of issues related to the precise interpretation of ideal deliberation in *The Stoic Life: Emotions, Duties, and Fate* (Oxford 2005). However, Brennan's focus is not on how the concerns of others figure in the wise person's reasoning. I do not have the space here to explain my disagreements with Brennan. With respect to the agents' own concerns, my interpretation is very close to John Cooper's views in "Greek Philosophers on Euthanasia and Suicide," in: Cooper, *Reason and Emotion* (Princeton 1999), 515-541.

catching a cold is to be preferred,” “I should take my umbrella.” This last impression would count as an action-engendering impression. When we assent to this impression, assent generates the impulse for an action—taking the umbrella. Reasoning that is relevant to action thus involves reasoning about what is the case (such as, whether it is raining today), reasoning about what has value and disvalue (not catching or catching a cold), and reasoning about what it is appropriate to do (taking the umbrella). Selection and deselection is central to this kind of reasoning since what one considers appropriate to do follows from which things one prefers and disprefers. If it was reasonable to prefer catching a cold, then one should not take one’s umbrella.—For the sake of simplicity, I shall refer to this kind of reasoning as deliberation.

A key point to note is that virtue itself does not figure in deliberation as one of several values. The agent never weighs the value of wealth against the claims of virtue. The perfect agent comes to see that virtue—and that is, perfect reasoning—is the only thing that, for a human being, is really good. Everything else, i.e., the things that deliberation is immediately concerned with, merely has value and disvalue. Virtue thus figures in deliberation insofar as it is the agent’s goal to deliberate *perfectly*.

Now it seems that the perfect agent is exclusively concerned with things of value and disvalue as they pertain to *her*: with *her* health, wealth, illness, and so on. This is what I am calling her concerns. The concerns of others, then, are the health, wealth, illness, poverty, etc., of others. Strangely, these do not seem to figure at all in ideal deliberation. We thus arrive at the following, implausible account of ideal deliberation:

Ideal Deliberation 2: The ideal agent perfectly selects and deselects things of value and disvalue, as they pertain to her. [Implausible]

Not a single example that survives in the fragments on early Stoic ethics discusses a case in which an agent would interact with others.⁶ In middle and late Stoic ethics such cases enter the debates—for example, the Stoics then discuss what two drowning sages with only one plank to hold on to would be doing. But in the early theory, which to a large extent still determines the framework of later Stoic thought, not a single case of this kind is discussed. This is rather disconcerting. Apparently, the concerns of others do not matter to the actions of the virtuous person—so much so, that the Stoic discussions of virtue do not even mention cases where the virtuous person interacts with others. But if that were so, Stoic cosmopolitanism would not be a theory that we find inspiring. For then it would have to be a theory according to which a perfect agent is exclusively concerned with values and disvalues as they pertain to her.

The world, for the Stoics, might still be like a city—but only in a way that has nothing to do with *political* or *ethical* cosmopolitanism. The point of the phrase ‘cosmic city’ might be that the cosmos is a complicated physical system that works according to laws, which makes it comparable to a city. If that is all that the expression amounts to, Stoic

⁶ For a discussion of early Stoic examples, and the lack of concern with others, see my “Die frühe stoische Theorie des Werts,” *Abwägende Vernunft*, eds. Ch. Schröder and F.-J. Bormann (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004), 61-77. In this paper, I also discuss how the Stoic theory has often been misportayed as if, according to the Stoics, virtue ‘trumps’ other considerations. It is key to the Stoic theory that virtue is not one of several considerations. Virtue consists in deliberating perfectly with a view to indifferent.

cosmopolitanism should not be advertised as a forerunner of ideas which today matter to us.

However, I do not think that we should draw this conclusion. In what follows, I hope to clarify Stoic views on these issues by pursuing a line of thought the starting-point of which we can, for the expository purposes of this paper, locate in Plato's *Republic*. This method is selective—there is much more ancient background that we could consider. However, I hope that it helps formulate some relevant questions, and put the Stoic proposals into perspective.

2. Can we view everyone as belonging to us? Plato and Aristotle

In Book I of the *Republic*, Socrates' first interlocutor Cephalus describes justice as *not performing certain types of actions vis-à-vis others*, such as deceiving them or keeping what belongs to them. The agent who, at the end of her life, has not performed such actions, looks back on a just life. Plato begins the *Republic* with what he takes to be an ordinary intuition: that justice has something to do with refraining from certain types of action, types of action that directly affect others in a negative way.⁷

⁷ I am here presupposing an interpretation of Book I of the *Republic* that I do not have the space to argue for—that the various ideas about justice that come up in Book I play a role that in some respects can be compared to Aristotelian *endoxa*. Each view that is discussed (Cephalus', the poet Simonides', Polemarchus', and Thrasymachus') contains ideas that the account of justice in the later books of the *Republic* addresses (by refuting them, or 'saving' that which is important about them, or re-interpreting the notions which figure importantly in them, such as the notion of friendship).

The official definition of justice in Book IV, however, is quite different. Justice is for every part or power of the soul to perform its job (its ‘function’) well (433a-b). Just action is the action that preserves this condition of the soul (433b). When, we might ask, did we lose sight of other agents? Plato has not entirely forgotten about them. He has Socrates say that, of course, the person whose soul is in the perfect state of justice is not going to do any of the lowly things that Cephalus mentioned, things like not giving back what belongs to others (442e f.). This claim goes unquestioned, and is not substantiated by argument. While the account of justice must meet the criterion of capturing our key intuitions about justice, Plato does not seem terribly interested in pursuing the question how just action affects other agents. Rather, he focuses on what justice does to the soul of the agent: just actions produce a just soul (444d f.).

Let me hasten to say that we should distinguish between two problems. Scholars have sometimes complained that Plato does not care sufficiently about rules, or about identifying which types of action are right and which are wrong. This may or may not be accurate, and it may or may not be problematic. But what concerns us now is a different point: that Plato is more concerned with how action retro-actively acts on the soul, rather than with how action affects other agents. Is this because Plato’s ethics, as critics of virtue ethics sometimes complain, is ‘selfish’, concerned with the agent’s perfection, rather than with the effects of her actions on others? The fact that the *Republic*’s investigation into human psychology is conducted within the framework of an investigation into a just city should give us pause. Certainly, a city is a place where one lives *with others*. How, then, do our relations to others enter the picture in the *Republic*?

Our relationships with others figure in the *Republic* insofar as, according to Socrates, a city is the better the more it is a unity. Consider the community of women and children. Most literally, the idea here is that we should regard everyone in the generation above us as if they were our parents, everyone in the same generation as siblings, and everyone in the next generation as our own offspring. Thus the city is maximally unified—its citizens view each other as belonging together like family-members. Aristotle complains that Socrates simply considers the overriding value of unity as a given, and makes it the core principle of his ideal city (*Politics* II.1-4 and IV.1). And to some extent he seems right. The city as a whole is organized so that, as much as possible, its citizens consider each other as relatives—as belonging to each other in the way in which the members of a family belong to each other. But is Aristotle right in saying that Plato's interest in unity is entirely unjustified? One reason, I think, why Plato puts unity so much at the center of his discussion is the following point about motivation. If people consider others as belonging to them, they will not see the concerns of others as the concerns of others, but as their *own* concerns. Plato does not seem to think that human beings could see the concerns of others as the concerns of unrelated others, and still be motivated to genuinely care. Rather, he seems to take it for granted that the way to make us care is to make us see these concerns as directly pertaining to *us*—the concerns of our relatives feel as if they were our own.

Aristotle thinks that this conception is deeply misguided. If I do not know which child in my child's generation is in fact my child (which is the result of Plato's community of

women and children), this will not make me consider a whole generation as my offspring. Rather, it sadly will make me view *no* child from that generation in this light. The attempt to consider everyone as belonging to us makes us view no one as belonging to us—that is what Aristotle thinks (*Politics* II.4). But he seems to share the idea that it is good to view others as belonging to us. However, on his conception, we should view them as belonging to us according to the various communities which structure human life. Each of these communities has its own, characteristic kind of friendship, and it would be misguided to want to assimilate all these forms of relatedness into one kind. Some relationships will have to be more distant than others, and the sense of belonging in each community will differ (*Politics* I.1-2, *NE* VIII.7-12).⁸

Thus Aristotle has two complaints. One, the unrivaled value that Plato assigns to unity is unaccounted for, and two, Plato's institutions do not generate unity. But we should also note a third aspect—whether the way in which one sees others as belonging to oneself reflects how things in fact are, or whether it is a perspective which is assumed for some salutary purpose. In the *Republic*, viewing others as relatives is based on deceitful institutions and myths. For it is of course not true that everyone in my generation is my sibling, and so on. Plato has much to say in the *Republic* about images and stories, and his views are too complicated to be discussed in passing. However, it is altogether implausible that he makes deceitful stories part of his ideal city which are not, at bottom,

⁸ See for example: “All the different kinds of community, then, are evidently parts of the political one; and along with community of each sort will go friendship of the same sort” (*NE* VIII.9, 1160a29-31, tr. Broadie/Rowe).

intended to convey a truth. This truth must be that, in fact, all citizens genuinely *are* related. However, Plato does not spell out anything like this in the *Republic*.

3. The Stoic response: all others belong to us

For the Stoics, the question of whether it is possible to regard all others as belonging to us, and the question of whether they in fact are, are deeply related. If all others are related to us, it must be possible to view them in this way. Doing so might be part of becoming wise, which is a rarely achieved state of perfection. However, not an impossible one. The Stoic question thus must be whether, if we fully understood the universe, it would turn out that all human beings belong together. The relevant sense of belonging together will not be the kinship envisaged in Plato's *Republic*. It is an obvious fact that we are not literally speaking siblings, parents, and children of everyone in the relevant generations. We therefore must ask whether there is a different sense, in which it is true that all human beings belong together.

The Stoics think that the universe is a large living being. Human beings are its parts. What the ideal agent understands about herself and everyone else is that they belong together as parts of a whole. This is a core claim of Stoic physics, which conceives of the universe as a thinking animal that moves by its perfect reason. To us, this idea may sound suspect. If human beings are to be understood as parts of a large living being, then they do not seem to be the kind of individuals we might think we need for an ethical theory. To put it rather bluntly: perhaps it turns out that, for the Stoics, there is no concern for others, since in fact, there *are* no others—what seem to be separate individuals in fact are

other parts of a large living being of which oneself is a part. This picture would lead us to take the concerns of others as relevant to our deliberations. Given the way we are related to them as fellow-parts of a whole, their concerns are our concerns. Within this picture, neither oneself nor others have the kind of standing that we associate with such honorific terms as ‘person.’ The concerns of others do not matter because others are *persons*, or *final ends*, or anything of that sort. The standing of human beings is that of parts of a whole. Mind, this does not mean that human beings are not individuals—they are. Human beings are individuated by, each of them, having a rational soul. But the way they figure in ideal deliberation is *not* qua being persons, and as such having value, a value that we ought to recognize. Other human beings are to be viewed as fellow-parts of the universe, and their concerns matter to an agent’s deliberation because they are, in some sense, *her* concerns.

I think that, whether we like it or not, this is the Stoic picture. Since scholars tended to dislike it, Stoic ethics has often been reconstructed in more Kantian terms. Let me sketch this alternative picture. According to the Stoics, the world is pervaded by reason, and all rational beings have a share in reason. Human reason can be perfected. Perfect human reason deliberates so as to arrive at lawlike pronouncements on what is to be done. A human being comes to have perfect reason if she understands nature and human nature. Understanding human nature critically involves understanding that all human beings have reason. All of this is, in one way or another, attested in the sources. But now reconstruction must add something that is not to be found in the testimony on Stoic thought. The next step in this chain of reasoning presumably is this: the fact that all

human beings have reason gives everyone equal standing (and value) as reasoners—as reasoners who, in their reasoning, can arrive at what is commanded by the law.

Modern scholarship has been sympathetic to this quasi-Kantian reconstruction, which seemed to have the great advantage of being free from dubious physical assumptions about the universe as a large living being, and from reducing human beings to ‘mere parts’.⁹ But it steers around central claims of Stoic philosophy in too deliberate a way, and it is ultimately misleading. I thus suggest a more literal reading of Stoic claims about the universe as a living being, with all living beings in it as its parts. As fellow-parts of the same whole, other human beings figure in an agent’s deliberation, if only she understands that this is how she should view others. Based on these considerations, we can redescribe how the Stoics conceive of ideal deliberation.

Ideal Deliberation 3: The ideal agent perfectly selects and deselects things of value and disvalue, as they pertain to her and all others.

4. Affection

When Plato discusses how one should view others as *relatives*, he thinks of an *affective* disposition. To see one’s child as one’s child is to love one’s child, and to view what happens to her as directly affecting ourselves. It is precisely for this reason that Aristotle finds Plato’s conception unrealistic. To love everyone is to love no one, he says. It is not part of the affective make-up of human beings that we can love everyone.

⁹ Cf. Gisela Striker’s discussion of these issues in “The Role of *oikeiôsis* in Stoic Ethics,” in her *Papers in Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics* (Cambridge 1996), 281-297.

In order to understand Stoic cosmopolitanism, we must investigate the idea that ‘belonging together’ is an *affective* relationship of liking or loving others. Stoic cosmopolitanism is closely related to the Stoic theory of affiliation. The Greek term that I translate here as ‘affiliation’ is often rendered untranslated: *oikeiôsis*.¹⁰ It describes a process of familiarizing ourselves with others *because* they belong to us—of coming to have the affective disposition towards related things which we tend to have only for what is in fact related to us, and which we do not have toward the related as long as we do not recognize *that* it is related. The Stoics think that we should view all human beings as related to us, or as belonging to us.¹¹ This is what the sources describe as Zeno’s dream: Zeno comes up with the dream that we should view all others as our fellow-citizens.¹² Those who take this perspective recognize each other as their relatives.¹³

¹⁰ I discuss these questions in detail in my book *Law, Reason, and the Cosmic City: Political Philosophy in the Early Stoa* (OUP, 2007); esp. 99-110 and 130-135.

¹¹ The Stoic Hierocles describes this task. In his account, the process of viewing others as belonging to us begins from concentric circles of relative closeness around each person’s soul. The agent is at the center; next come family members, more and more distant relatives, local residents, fellow-citizens, people from neighbouring towns, fellow-countrymen, and finally the whole human race. “Once all these have been surveyed, it is the task of a well-tempered man, in his proper treatment of each group, to draw the circles together somehow towards the center, and to keep zealously transferring those from the enclosing circles into the enclosed ones [...] It is incumbent on us (*proskaitai*) to esteem (*timêteon*) people from the third circle as if they were those from the second, and again to esteem our other relatives as if they were those from the third circle. For although the greater distance in blood will remove some of the affection, we must still try hard to assimilate them. The right point will be reached if, through our own initiative, we reduce the distance of the relationship with each person.” (Stobaeus 4.671,7-673,11 = LS 57G; tr. Long and Sedley, with some changes).

¹² “The much-admired *Republic of Zeno* . . . is aimed at this one main point, that we should not dwell in cities or peoples, each one marked out by its own notions of what is just [*idiois dikaiois*], but we should regard all human beings as our fellow members of the populace and fellow-citizens, and there should be one way of life and order, like that of a herd grazing together and nurtured by a common law. Zeno wrote this, picturing as it

Scholars have described Stoic cosmopolitanism as calling for impartiality.¹⁴ However, what Stoic *oikeiôsis* calls for is quite different from the modern idea that morality demands an impartial perspective. The theory of *oikeiôsis* is concerned with our *affective disposition* towards others. The Stoics argue that we should come to see a relatedness between all human beings, and they characterize this relatedness as kinship. Coming to recognize this kinship is not, as it were, a purely intellectual matter; it consists in coming to assume a certain affective, relational disposition.

In order to relate correctly toward all, we have to ‘love’ all. However, in order to interpret this idea, we must turn to Stoic thought about the emotions (*pathê*). The idea is not to ‘love’ others in a sense in which love is an emotion—that is, for the Stoics, an irrational movement of the mind, accompanied by irrational actions. The ideal agent has no emotions. However, the Stoics do not ask us to envisage a perfect being without any type of affective disposition toward others. The wise person has ‘rational feelings,’ and among these is a friendly disposition toward others, involving kindness, generosity, warmth and

were a dream or image of a philosopher’s well-regulated regime.” (Plutarch, *De virt. Alex.* 329A–B = SVF 1.262 part = LS 67A) I discuss the trustworthiness of this passage in “Plutarch über Zenons Traum. Ist die politische Philosophie der frühen Stoa kosmopolitisch?,” in Marcel v. Ackeren and Jörn Müller (eds.), *Antike Philosophie Verstehen – Understanding Ancient Philosophy*, (Darmstadt: WBG, 2006), 196–217; the question of whether we should credit already Zeno with the idea that all human beings are fellow-citizens of the cosmos is discussed in detail in my *Law, Reason, and the Cosmic City*, Chapter 2.

¹³ “All who are not virtuous are personal and public enemies, slaves, and alienated from one another, including parents from children, brothers from brothers, relatives from relatives. They criticize him again for presenting [...] only virtuous people the *Republic* as citizens, friends, relatives, and free.” (DL 7.32–33; tr. LS with changes

¹⁴ Cf., e.g., Annas, *Morality of Happiness* (Oxford 1995), 265.

affection (DL 7.116). It is this kind of ‘love’ which ideally we would feel for everyone. Thus, while we may think of paternal affection as the kind of emotion that will involve despair and deep grief if the child dies, this is not the kind of affective disposition that is called for toward everyone. According to the Stoics, one should not respond in this way to the death of one’s own child, and thus, being disposed toward everyone as ‘belonging to oneself,’ one should not respond in this way to a distant child’s death.¹⁵

While it might seem impossible, for instance, to fall into deep grief about a distant child’s death, it seems quite possible to extend ‘rational feelings’ to all human beings. An ancient critic points out that it is impossible to relate to the most distant Mysian in the way in which we relate to ourselves and to those closest to us.¹⁶ The Stoics would reply that, first of all, we have to change how we relate to those close to us. It is integral to wisdom that we rid ourselves of the violent emotions that tend to go along with close relationships. Once we relate to those closest to us in the way we should, namely with *rational* affections, it is perhaps quite possible to extend this attitude to all others.¹⁷ We can, again, add to our account of ideal deliberation, as the Stoics understand it.

¹⁵ Note that the typical affections toward relatives are not always positive—there’s not only love for one’s children, but also very often envy and jealousy among siblings, resentment toward parents, etc. To relate to everyone as one relates to one’s relatives, the Stoics would think, would one way or the other be a disaster. Plato’s conception of viewing everyone as belonging to us can only be a desirable state if the relevant affective dispositions are *rational* affective dispositions (i.e., not emotions, but what the Stoics call rational feelings).

¹⁶ Anonymous commentary on Plato’s *Theaetetus*, 5.18-6.31

¹⁷ In a critical response to the view that the Stoics are concerned with impartiality, it has been suggested that, actually, they are concerned with *universalized partiality*, rather than with impartiality. Keimpe Algra, “The Mechanism of Social Appropriation and Its Role in Hellenistic Ethics,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 25 (2003): 265–296. But as we can see with a view to Stoic thought on the emotions, even this is not entirely correct.

Ideal Deliberation 4: The ideal agent perfectly selects and deselects things of value and disvalue, as they pertain to her and all others. She views everyone with the rational feelings of kindness, generosity, warmth and affection.

5. The burdens of cosmopolitanism

From the point of view of contemporary discussions, we might think that many questions still remained unanswered, and worse, unasked. Most strikingly, the Stoics do not seem to worry whose concerns we should consider first and foremost (given that we should consider everyone's concerns, but probably are unable to do so). Among scholars, it is customary to turn to Epictetus, who says that, in trying to figure out what one should be doing, one must consider the various roles one has. In the first place, one is a human being; second, one is a citizen of the world and a part of it; third, one is someone's son and someone's sibling; fourth, one holds a specific job at a given place, is of a certain age, is or is not someone's father, and so on (*Discourses* 2.10.1-12).¹⁸

However, while these considerations could be seen as implications of the early Stoic theory, I am not sure that we should consider them, as it were, as a Stoic attempt to

The Stoic theory could only allow for a kind of partiality that is freed from all emotion, and that is not the kind of partiality which partialists today have in mind. What is called for, by the Stoics, is an extended sense of what belongs to oneself, tied to a rational affective disposition. This is different from an impartial point of view in the (standard) sense of modern ethical theory, insofar as it is an affective disposition. It is at the same time different from 'universalized partiality', insofar as the emotions which usually go along with partiality are not part of the ideal.

¹⁸ In *Law, Reason, and the Cosmic City*, I refer to these ideas in passing, but I do not make much of them—it simply does not seem to be well attested that the early Stoics raised worries about the overdemandingness of cosmopolitanism.

resolve the overdemandingness of cosmopolitanism. Perhaps the early Stoics simply did not think of cosmopolitanism as too burdensome, and therefore did not feel the need to formulate criteria that help us decide whose concerns we should consider most relevant to our actions.¹⁹

If we believe Seneca, the Stoics see cosmopolitanism as liberating, rather than overly demanding. Seneca does not seem to think that cosmopolitanism burdens us with the unfeasible task of helping everyone. Rather, cosmopolitanism creates options: in seeking to be of benefit to others, we need not confine ourselves to the place where we happen to be located. Perhaps people at one place do not appreciate us—if so, we can turn elsewhere, aiming to be of benefit at some other place (cf. *Letter* 68.2). Thus, Seneca does not approach the question of whom out of everyone we should benefit as if the practical problem were that we do not have the resources to benefit everyone. He looks at another practical problem: that our help is not always wanted, or more generally speaking, that we are not always *able* to be of benefit, even if we would like to. In *On the Private Life* 3.5, Seneca goes so far as to envisage a case where the only person whom one is in fact able to help is oneself: “What is required, you see, of any man is that he should be of use to other men—if possible, to many; failing that, to a few; failing that, to those nearest him; failing that, to himself.”

A further clue can be taken from the way in which the Stoics use the names of family relationships. While Plato would genuinely like us to consider everyone as siblings,

¹⁹ Cicero’s most explicit discussion of various criteria is *On Duties* I.16.50 f.

parents, and children, the Stoics use the names of family relationships in both technical and ordinary ways. That is, they on the one hand think that it is genuinely true that all human beings are relatives, by virtue of them being parts of the cosmos. This is the technical sense of being a relative. But it is also true that we are relatives in the ordinary sense of some particular people. I think the Stoics recognize that this, too, is a truth about the cosmos: that we are standing in some particular relations to some particular parts of the world. This recognition is reflected in the fact that the Stoics continue to speak of someone's parents and siblings in the ordinary sense. Unlike Plato, they do not think that coming to view all other as relatives involves no longer seeing, for example, my sister as my sister. Both facts about the universe—that all parts of it are interrelated, and that some parts of it stand in closer relationships than others—are facts that perfect deliberation must take into account. We can thus make a tentative addition to our account of ideal deliberation.

Ideal Deliberation 5: The ideal agent perfectly selects and deselects things of value and disvalue, as they pertain to her and all others. She views everyone with the rational feelings of kindness, generosity, warmth and affection. [The question of whose concerns she most directly responds to depends, on the one hand, on whom she *can* help, and on the other hand, on a delicate balance between her being a relative of everyone in the technical sense, and a relative of some particular people in the ordinary sense of the term.]²⁰

²⁰ I am including the tentative aspect of this account in square brackets.

6. The good benefits

When Seneca speaks about cosmopolitanism, he does not discuss how we should consider what I call the concerns of everyone as relevant to our actions. Rather, he speaks of helping or benefiting others, and in the last couple of paragraphs of this paper, I have fallen in with this way of speaking. By way of conclusion, let me turn to the relevant background assumption—the Stoic view that the good benefits.

In Book II of the *Republic*, Plato presents the claim that whatever is good is beneficial (or useful, depending on how we want to translate the text) (379b). The centrality of this claim is easily missed since it is put forward in the middle of what might appear to be Plato's theology. When Socrates explains that in the ideal city poetry must not portray the gods as murderers, thieves, rapists, and so on, he says that god is good, and everything good is of benefit. This is how god and the gods must be portrayed. However, the claim that the good benefits is by no means confined to Plato's theological views. It already figures in Book I, when Socrates reminds us of a problem that was repeatedly discussed in earlier dialogues: if virtue was an art (or expertise), it could be used to the opposite effect. Like medicine can be used to heal and to poison, virtue, understood as an expertise, could be used to good and ill effect. But this is impossible, since virtue benefits (332d-335d). In a number of dialogues, Socrates is presented as a relentless proponent of the claim that *virtue always and under all conditions benefits*, which is not true for anything else. Even though Plato's account of virtue in Book IV of the *Republic* is silent on the effects of our actions on others, I think we should assume that this is a criterion that Plato thinks it meets.

The Stoics forcefully endorse the Socratic claim that only virtue benefits. But if virtue benefits, then it would seem that the virtuous agent must be someone who benefits, or is useful. The Stoics go so far as to define the good as benefit or ‘that which is of use’.²¹

This part of Stoic ethics is as yet underappreciated, and my suspicion is that this has something to do with our tendency to make the Stoics more Kantian than they are.²²

Cicero is already cautious. He is well aware of the Stoic thesis that the good is useful. But he still thinks that, in deliberation, it is one thing to think in terms of the honorable, and another to think in terms of the useful, thus contrasting the virtuous and the useful in a way that is inconceivable within Stoic ethics. Cicero associates the perspective of the useful with selfish reasoning and one’s own advantage, rather than insisting, as the Stoics would, that only what is good is genuinely useful (*On Duty* 1.9-10).

The force of the thesis that the good benefits shows in Seneca’s thought on cosmopolitanism. For him, it is obvious that the way in which we should concern ourselves with others results in action that is to their benefit.²³ The rational, affective disposition of kindness, generosity and affection that the ideal agent has is not, as it were, ‘merely’ affection. Like emotions, rational affections go along with action. The kind and

²¹ Sextus Empiricus, M 11.21-24.

²² I discuss related issues, especially with a view to Stoic thought about definition, concepts, and preconceptions, in “The Good is Benefit. On the Stoic Definition of the Good,” forthcoming in *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*.

²³ However, Seneca is careful in his choice of words. While he clearly accepts the Stoic claim that the good benefits, he is careful to phrase this point in terms of the Latin ‘*beneficere*’, which can be rendered as ‘good-doing’, rather than in terms of the good being useful. In fact, he says that those who describe the good as the useful have a cheap notion of the good—they think of shoes and wine as good (*Letter* 120.2).

affectionate agent is the agent who benefits others.²⁴ I thus arrive at my final account of ideal deliberation.

Ideal Deliberation 6: The ideal agent perfectly selects and deselects things of value and disvalue, as they pertain to her and all others. She views everyone with the rational feelings of kindness, generosity, warmth and affection. Her affective relational dispositions result in actions that are of benefit to others. [The question of whose concerns she most directly responds to depends, on the one hand, on whom she *can* help, and on the other hand, on a delicate balance between her being a relative of everyone in

²⁴ The Stoic idea that the good benefits is also reflected in another aspect of the Stoic theory of the emotions. Recall, the ideal agent does not have emotions; rather, she has rational feelings that replace, in her affective dispositions and reactions, emotions. For the Stoics, there are four kinds of emotions: Pleasure, which is directed at a presumed good in the present; pain, which is directed at a presumed bad in the present; desire, directed at a future presumed good; and fear, directed at a future presumed evil. But these four generic emotions are replaced by only three generic rational feelings. Joy replaces pleasure. Caution replaces fear. Well-wishing replaces desire. Why, we may ask, is there no rational replacement for pain? If the ideal agent feels joy when seeing an instance of virtue, why does she not feel a rational version of pain when seeing something bad, which she often has occasion to do? Does she not care about the many bad actions that she encounters? Is it, implausibly, the Stoics' position that ideally we do not react at all when we see crimes being committed, injustice done, and so on? No, and at this point Seneca transmits an interesting argument (*On Peace of Mind* 15.1, *On Anger* 1.12). The ideal agent judges bad actions to be bad actions, and she aims to defend the victims, or bring the wrongdoer to court, or whatever may alter the situation for the better. But she will not be 'rationally saddened'. The reason why there are no rational versions of what we today call the negative moral emotions is that any kind of negative affective reaction would lack the mark of virtue—namely, that virtue benefits. If the wise person were rationally saddened by all the badness around her, people would be discouraged. But it is the wise person's job to react in a way that benefits people. Therefore, her way of reacting to vice is to give people the hope that things can change. Thus, the ideal agent brings criminals to court, or whatever may be appropriate, but she does not have emotional reactions of any negative kind—these would not be useful, and that is why they cannot be part of the ethical ideal of the Stoics.

the technical sense, and a relative of some particular people in the ordinary sense of the term.]

The Stoics are, on the interpretation that I have presented, justly called cosmopolitanists. Virtue, for the Stoics, is an affective relational disposition to all other human beings—a disposition of affection, and a disposition to act in ways that are useful and beneficial to all others. But other agents are not viewed as separate persons, who as such have the special value of persons. Rather, we should recognize them as fellow-parts of the world, for whom things have value and disvalue.