THESIS

HOW TO PRIORITIZE AS A CITIZEN OF THE UNIVERSE

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ABSTRACT

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Stoicism has gained a bit of popularity in certain circles recently, and much of this popularity revolves around the way that Stoicism enables and guides moral progress on an individual level, regardless of the circumstances. However, Stoic ethics also features an element of cosmopolitanism - essentially, other-oriented ethical principles that an ideal Stoic would follow. These principles tell us that we are all members of a common rational community, with every agent in the rationally organized universe being a member of this community. Naturally, the human lifespan is not long enough to equally address every rational being in the universe, so some sort of prioritization is required. However, Stoics place two requirements on our actions. We must ground our actions in knowledge, and both Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus directly advise us to avoid unnecessary actions. These requirements combined with the other-oriented moral principles lead Stoics to a state of moral paralysis - where the actions that seem to be morally required of them are epistemically unjustified. This paralysis needs to be solved if Stoicism is to serve as a meaningful system of other-oriented ethics. Fortunately, an account of expertise is given in a piece of secondary literature by Simon Shogry which, combined with later Stoic insights, serves to alleviate this paralysis.

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Introduction

The philosophy of Stoicism, and in particular the ethical practices recommended by it, have made a comeback in recent years. There could be a number of possible reasons for this, but the world that we live in bears stark similarities to the world inhabited by the Roman Stoics - Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, and Seneca. Like the Roman Empire, we live in a convoluted political system, where we are told each citizen has input but that input seems ultimately meaningless. Our political leaders seem to be disconnected from the concerns of the average everyday citizen, and the world itself feels more and more out of control. Stoic ethics is at its best when explaining how someone can hold responsibility and live a good life even under these kinds of circumstances.

However, Stoicism comes with its own set of difficulties (as does any philosophical system). Stoicism historically faced a number of attacks in one of its weakest areas: epistemology. Sextus Empiricus and the Pyrrhonists were the contemporary opponents to the Stoics, and put forth a number of arguments as to why the Stoics cannot have knowledge in the cases they claim to. The purpose of this thesis is not to rehash those ancient objections, but to offer a new sort of skeptical attack on the Stoics. Cosmopolitan ethics - the outward looking ethical practices particularly emphasized by Marcus Aurelius - requires us to assess the moral status of the people around us. Given the Stoic standard for knowledge, and their story about how we get this knowledge in everyday cases, we should not be able to evaluate people so easily. But, the practice of cosmopolitanism requires that we do this in order to prioritize our efforts. We are, after all, limited beings and we must live in accord with this fact. But, it seems that we are

unable to help our communities effectively without prioritizing, and prioritizing seems epistemically dubious.

I am interested not in tearing Stoicism down, but rather solving this difficulty for how one actually lives by Stoic principles. However, a substantial amount of exegesis is first required. First, the inner workings of cosmopolitanism need to be accounted for and explained, so that the place where the skeptical attack occurs will be clear. This explanation will constitute the first chapter of the thesis. The attack itself needs to be made, and requires more in-depth discussion of Stoic epistemology. This attack and its prerequisite discussion will come in Chapter Two. Finally, the implications of the attack will be explored in chapter three. What to do about this skeptical argument and how the Stoics can push back will also be covered in this chapter. First, it is worth exploring how cosmopolitanism comes about from more basic Stoic doctrine.

Chapter One: Cosmopolitan Basics

Among the most currently popular Stoic works is the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius. In this work, Marcus writes down some of his thoughts and 'best practices' for applying Stoicism correctly and living a virtuous life. Marcus writes in this work not from a position of authority, but from the position of a practitioner of Stoic philosophy. He views himself not as an exceptional philosopher or an authority on theory, but as a man struggling to practice Stoic virtue, and recognizing the difficulty of it. Central to his practices is the notion of cosmopolitanism - the idea that "we should regard all men as fellow-citizens and local residents, and there should be one way of life and order, like that of a herd grazing together and nurtured by a common law."[1] This principle is one that plays an important role in both the suggested ethical practices that Marcus puts forward and his recommended practices for reminding oneself of the ethical principles. However, Marcus' conception of cosmopolitanism and the practices that accompany it are derived from other Stoic doctrines. Following the path of these derivations will give us the most accurate construal of Stoic cosmopolitanism - and help us to understand how a philosophy centered on attending to one's own moral character can lead to an outward ethical practice. These are the principles that ultimately lead to our skeptical attack by causing an internal tension with other Stoic ideas - ones that need to be verified if the practice of cosmopolitanism is to be preserved.

The core premises of the Stoics need to be accepted before deriving one's specific moral obligations. For Stoics, the endgame of learning philosophy was practicing virtue. Diogenes

[1] Plutarch, *On the fortune of Alexander* 329 A - B, **67A**, in Long & Sedley 1987.

Laertius quotes Zeno of Citium, the founder of Stoicism as writing: "the chief good was confessedly to live according to nature; which is to live according to virtue, for nature leads us to this point."[2] While living according to Nature is the foundational moral principle for Stoics to abide by, that principle hardly gives one an indication as to *how* nature "leads us to this point". A more detailed definition is owed to Chrysippus: "to live according to virtue is the same thing as living according to one's experience of those things which happen by nature."[3] This gives us a little more to work with - and can help explain why Stoics think we should live virtuously. As Chrysippus says, virtue is living in accord with one's experiences - experiences that we are constantly bombarded by, no matter what. We cannot escape experience. Furthermore, the Stoics hold that all things happen by Nature. So, the Stoics see no choice but to live in accord with our experience. Additionally, we must live our lives this way intentionally, it is not enough to accidentally act virtuously. For the Stoics, virtue is not something that one decides to practice one day, or a preference, but it is rather the only rational way to live a life.

Because of its connection with experience, virtue can be looked at as a form of 'metaphysical recognition'. This essentially involves recognizing the objects of experience for what they *really* are. Diogenes Laertius quotes Cleanthes, one of the heads of the Stoic school that followed its founder Zeno, as claiming that: "if a rational animal goes the wrong way, it is because it allows itself to be misled by the deceitful appearances of exterior things."[4] While not all appearances are misleading, Cleanthes is accounting for those cases in which a rational animal fails at achieving this metaphysical recognition. Appearances are one of many of the experiences we must live in accord with, and the Stoics attribute departure from virtue to these

[2] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 7.1.53, trans. C. D. Yonge 1915.
[3] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 7.1.53, trans. C. D. Yonge 1915.
[4] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 7.1.53, trans. C. D. Yonge 1915.

‘deceitful appearances’. These appearances are ones that do not reflect or represent an object’s true nature, or cause us to update our beliefs regarding an object in an incorrect way. One way to do this is to fail to recognize things for what they truly are - such as treating a mirage as real, or to a lower degree, confusing a tangerine with an orange. Also, we can recognize things for what they are without, in a given context, correctly considering all of their essential properties - such as recognizing a human as a social animal without considering its rationality, or recognizing a piece of quartz without properly considering its distinctive qualities, such as its texture and hardness. Similarly, we can apply an experience to objects beyond it - for example, if my interactions with quartz led me to have certain expectations about the hardness and texture of limestone. The tricky thing is that deceitful appearances are experiences as well. The Stoics ask us not to blindly follow experience, as we would be misled, but to filter our experiences, and essentially draw the right conclusions from them. Beyond the recognition component, we also must respond appropriately once we recognize a thing for what it truly is. Doing so involves a fairly comprehensive practice, and requires certain connections to the metaphysical, logical, and epistemic principles of Stoic doctrine.

Living a Virtuous Stoic Life

These connections take a bit of piecing together. Marcus’ writings primarily talk about Stoic ethics and the application of them, and so make little mention of his epistemic and metaphysical views specifically. The tight connection Stoics held between their ethical practices and their logical and epistemic doctrines stems from the general order in which they place the areas of philosophy. The Stoics divide philosophy into three core areas: logic, physics, and ethics. These areas all pertain to major categories of the elements of the universe - logic helps us interact with propositions and arguments, physics with objects and causes, and ethics with

ourselves and other beings. So, knowledge of these areas of philosophy results in knowledge about the universe. This knowledge makes us more capable of identifying things for what they truly are - and therefore helps us to live virtuously. The Stoics not only hold that one must be educated in matters of logic, physics, and ethics to act virtuously, but that the possession of this knowledge is virtuous in its own right. Diogenes Laertius tells us that: "Panaetius teaches that there are two virtues, one speculative and the other practical, but others make three kinds, the logical, the natural and the ethical."[5] The claim here is quite strong. Not only is virtue best understood through the lens of the Stoic division of philosophy, but it is genuinely divided according to it. Each of these three types of knowledge, the logical, physical, and ethical, is required to fully practice virtue. Understanding each of these three areas is essential for acting rationally, which is just to act according to Nature. For Stoics, Nature itself is providential - meaning that it is rationally organized, and this organization is itself inherently good. Essentially, the universe is constructed in such a way that whatever happens is best for the whole, despite its appearances from an individual standpoint. This has a number of implications for their doctrines concerning the other areas of philosophy.

For Stoics, the rationality that we possess is itself a reflection of the entity that they ask us to live in accord with: Nature/God/Zeus. Talking about this entity can be a bit confusing, so it is at this point that certain distinctions become warranted. The term 'nature' refers to the way things are, such as "the nature of a stone" referring to a stone's essential properties. However, the term 'Nature' is used to refer to the universe as a whole. It is Nature that is the more central notion in Stoic doctrine. This entity encompasses not only the constituents of the universe, but also the way in which those constituents are organized. Nature/God/Zeus is distinctively rational,

[5] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 7.1.54, trans. C. D. Yonge 1915.

and that very rationality is responsible for the order of our universe: cause and effect, the nature of substance, and all the factors that explain why we find ourselves here, in a universe that works this way. Furthermore, it is Nature's rationality that results in the value of Providence. As Nature is a rational being, it would not organize itself in any way but the one that is best for the whole. Nature itself is responsible for our nature as human beings, our nature as rational beings, and even our animal nature. It is this that the Stoics argue we must live in accord with: the rational order of the universe as well as the entities that compose it. Since the universe itself is organized by reason and rationality, we need to understand reason and rationality in order to live in accord with it. A key component of acquiring this understanding is the study of logic, as the Stoics "assert that all affairs are looked at by means of that speculation which proceeds by argument."[6] Accordingly, we need to have knowledge of this speculation in order to truly understand anything. For the Stoics, physics tends to cover those relevant facts by which we proceed to speculate - namely, facts about Nature. It seems that without proper knowledge of logic and physics, the practice of virtue in general is impossible.

The influence of these Stoic doctrines on Marcus can be seen through the content of his reminders and his reasoning throughout the *Meditations*. One excellent example is the following passage:

> Some things [N]ature is indifferent to; if it privileged one thing or the other, it would hardly have created both. And if we want to follow nature, to be of one mind with it, we need to share its indifference. To privilege pleasure over pain - life over death, fame over anonymity - is clearly blasphemous. Nature certainly doesn't.[7]

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[6] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 7.1.50, trans. C. D. Yonge 1915.
[7] Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 9.1, trans. Gregory Hays 2002. My brackets.

This passage incorporates a number of recognizable Stoic principles from metaphysical to ethical doctrine. Because of this, passages like these can be especially indicative of the deliberative process someone trying to live a Stoic life might use to guide their actions. There are a number of claims here that smuggle in pieces of Stoic doctrine in other, non-ethical areas. Investigating each of these in turn will give us a good indication of the reasoning Marcus uses to reach his practical conclusions.

The first sentence of the passage echoes thoughts written earlier by Marcus, and suggests the incorporation of these thoughts into his reasoning in the above passage from Book 9. Marcus writes in book five: "what happens to an individual is a cause of well being in what directs the world - of its well being, its fulfillment, of its very existence, even."[8] We have other passages in Marcus that reinforce this idea: that what Nature allows to happen is good. Given this, the Stoics need to account for how events seem to be bad from the standpoint of the individual, but are ultimately good from the perspective of the whole. The only way in which the external circumstances that happen to us are good is that they allow for an opportunity to practice virtue. In a sense, the good-ness of external circumstances is only indirect. The 'good' of external circumstances is not based on whatever the content of the circumstances is, but only on how the circumstances allow us to refine our own moral character.

As mentioned earlier, the way for one to live a good life as a Stoic is to live in accord with Nature, which involves living in accord with both Nature and our rational human nature. As such, one wants to echo certain qualities of Nature in order to foster virtue in one's self. One key way to do this is to echo Nature in rationality, which partially involves recognizing the things for what they really are. We want to recognize things external to us as what they truly are - which

[8] Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 5.8, trans. Gregory Hays 2002.

means we need to mirror Nature's attitudes towards it. Nature cannot be mistaken about the genuine reality of things, as it is Nature that determines that same reality. As established by the first sentence in our passage from Book 9, Nature treats certain things indifferently. Since our basic form of virtue is to live in accord with Nature, then it follows that regarding these things as indifferent is virtuous. This is what Marcus means when he says, "we need to share its indifference." We know that when Nature determines something to be indifferent, we also should regard it as indifferent.

This leaves open which things are genuinely indifferent, and therefore leaves open which things we need to regard as indifferent in order to act virtuously. In order to answer this question, we need to bring in a principle commonly referred to as the Dichotomy of Control. This principle is best summarized by Epictetus, in the opening line of his *Enchiridion*:

> Some things are within our power, while others are not. Within our power are opinion, motivation, desire, aversion, and in a word, whatever is our own doing; not within our power are our body, our property, reputation, office, and in a word, whatever is not our own doing.[9]

This principle has more force when we truly realize the four things that we do have control over: desire, aversion, impulse, and opinion[10]. Basically, these four things are the only things that relate to or stem from our rational faculty, and therefore our moral character exclusively. Things stemming from other parts of the soul, such as our passions or our movements, are subject to other influences than our rationality - the spark of Nature within us. This essentially classifies those movements or passions as indifferent. So, the only good or bad things in a situation are our desires, aversions, impulses, and opinions relevant to that situation. Every other aspect of the

[9] Epictetus, *Enchiridion* 1, trans. Robin Hard

[10] I prefer 'impulse' to 'motivation' as the fourth category of cognitive states - those which are carried into action.

situation is something that does not relate to how we live in accord with Nature, so it does not relate to whether or not the situation is truly good or bad.

So, like Marcus indicates in our passage of choice, the situation itself - those things that are out of our control about it - is *genuinely* indifferent. So, in order to live in accord with Nature, we also treat those things that are outside our control as indifferent. The specific things that Marcus mentions: life and death, as well as fame and anonymity, are clear examples of something not up to us. It is not up to us whether a certain event kills us or not, or whether we possess fame or anonymity throughout our lives. As such, these things cannot be truly good. Nature allows both of them to exist in the world at the same time, and leaves these things out of our control. Nature, however, does not allow things which are harmful to it to exist. So, these things cannot be truly bad either. Because of this, death, fame, and anonymity must be indifferent, as a rational Nature would not allow both to exist at the same time if they were otherwise.[11]

This sort of reasoning from metaphysical principles to applying ethical practices is typical of the Stoics, and even comes recommended by Marcus as a way to remind ourselves of our place in Nature:

> Go straight to the seat of intelligence - your own, the world's, your neighbor's. Your own - to ground it [your intelligence] in justice. The world's - to remind yourself what it is that you're a part of. Your neighbor's - to distinguish ignorance from calculation. And recognize it as like yours.[12]

Reminding ourselves of our own nature and of the different constituent parts of Nature around us is helpful in reminding us what we need to take into consideration when we act. In each moment,

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[11] This type of reasoning is exemplified by Epictetus in *Discourses* I.1.
[12] Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations,* 9.22, trans. Gregory Hays 2002. My brackets.

we must remember that the morally right (virtuous) action is that action which is in harmony with Nature.

This means that in each case of moral decision making, the nature of the universe, the nature of human beings, the nature of your own consciousness and that of your neighbors, are things we need to act in accord with. These factors tend to stem from facts about us that are external to us - those facts about us which are out of our control. For example, we must always live in accord with human nature for we are always humans. Similarly, we must always live in accord with our nature as perceivers, for we are always perceiving. It is circumstances such as these that do the most work in moral decision making. These persistent external circumstances do not always provide us with a specific course of action, but they do allow us to eliminate a vast swathe of alternate courses of action. No virtuous action can go against our nature as humans, or as perceivers, perhaps even as epistemic agents. The Stoics have a particular conception of what constitutes human nature - what we ought to do as human beings. Human nature consists of those essential properties of human beings that are not already covered in other constituent parts of our nature, such as our nature as corporeal beings, or even more generally, our nature as bodies/substances.

One distinctive aspect of human life for the Stoics is the rational and social aspect. A dog does not worry about how their actions will impact their friends or family, nor its fellow citizens. What is unique about humans is not only that they should apply their rationality to the situations they find themselves in, but they find themselves in complex social situations, and must apply their rationality to these situations as well. It is not that humans are the only social animals, nor are they the only rational animals. This social dimension is itself a unique component of human nature. The Stoics argue that living in accord with our social nature is essential to living in

accord with Nature, and we are even told that "Chrysippus again understands that the nature, in a manner corresponding to which we ought to live, is both the common nature, and also human nature in particular."[13] Since Nature has chosen to make us human beings, it is essential to living in accord with Nature to also live in accord with our human nature, since that human nature is itself a component of Nature. Living in accord with this human nature specifically is a bit more complex than applying the more general principle of living in accord with Nature generally.

The Complexities of Human nature

The social aspect of human nature falls out of the rational component. We have already touched on the idea that applying rationality properly is simply recognizing things for what they genuinely are, and then acting appropriately. Keeping in mind the Dichotomy of Control is a key element of this, and regarding those things that are out of our control as indifferent is a big part of the metaphysical recognition component of virtue. Living in accord with the social aspect of human nature is a bit more difficult because much of our social life lies within our control. Therefore, the social realm holds at least some degree of genuine moral significance. Marcus Aurelius writes that: "We were born to work together, like feet, hands, and eyes, like the two rows of teeth, upper and lower. To obstruct each other is unnatural."[14] This passage indicates that the Stoics hold that cooperation is the appropriate way to respond when one recognizes rational beings for what they are. Furthermore, rationality is used in two different senses here. There is rational in the potential sense - that is, the capacity to act in accord with reason. There is also rational in the active sense - currently acting according to reason. This means that when we recognize a person as *passively* rational, cooperation is the appropriate - and therefore virtuous - response. This points to some counterintuitive results - for example, recognizing a murderer as

[13] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers,* 7.1.53, trans. C. D. Yonge 1915.
[14] Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 2.1, trans. Gregory Hays 2002.

rational does not mean that we automatically cooperate with them in their attempts to murder. It is that we must remember that the standard of appropriateness is rationality - not just our rationality, but the rationality present in the mechanics and structure of the universe. Due to this construal of rationality, there is a fact of the matter about what is *actively* rational given a set of circumstances. The Stoics would hold that cooperating with the murderer cannot be *actively* rational because it is not *actively* rational for him to murder. To do so would obstruct both the murderer and the murdered, and therefore goes against nature. However, the murderer remains *passively* rational in that they can always act in accord with reason, and failing to be *actively* rational does not inhibit this *passive* rationality that they possess.

We see the idea of obstruction and doing each other harm as unnatural a lot throughout Marcus. Remember here that the measure of moral good is living in accord with Nature. Of course, it follows from the claim that obstruction is unnatural - in the sense that it goes against Nature - that it is also morally wrong. We have other passages where Marcus echoes this idea, although a bit more strongly. In book two of *Meditations*, he writes that the human soul degrades itself "when it turns its back on another person or sets out to do it harm."[15] Not only is this sort of behavior unnatural and therefore morally wrong, but it is also morally wrong because it leads the human soul to degrade itself - it is poor management of that which is in our control. In this way, performing a morally wrong action is essentially a form of self-harm. The claim that acting against Nature degrades the human soul requires a bit more explanation, and this explanation also offers another argument for why we should live virtuously.

Virtue, as has been said several times already, is to live in accord with, or according to, or in harmony with Nature. This tells us how we might go about living virtuous lives, but is rather

[15] Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 2.16, trans. Gregory Hays 2002.

uninformative as to what virtue actually is. Diogenes Laertius tells us that “Virtue is a disposition of the mind always consistent and always harmonious.”[16] For the Stoics, “mind” and “soul” can be confusing terms. What Diogenes Laertius refers to as mind is often referred to by other authors as “soul” or “rational faculty of the soul”. Marcus often refers to this same entity as the “ruling centre”. All of these terms refer to a single thing, best encompassed by the Greek term *hegemonikon*. This is the part of the soul/mind responsible for rationality, decision making, the processing of perceptions, and many other typical mental functions. This sets it apart from the other parts of the soul, to which the Stoics attribute our passions, our movements, and our growth. Importantly, the *hegemonikon* is subject only to itself, to rationality. These other parts of the soul are subject to much more than rationality, thus making them not the criterion of virtue. So, virtue is a state of the *hegemonikon*. This has several implications, but the most important is that the quality of someone’s *hegemonikon* is dependent upon whether or not it is virtuous since virtue is simply a harmonious disposition of it. This is what Marcus is referring to when he says that the soul degrades itself - allowing these other parts of the soul to influence our decisions, and not merely leaving those to the *hegemonikon*. Since virtue is the primary good, a lack of that primary good would result in something rare for the Stoics - genuine moral evil. When we turn our backs on one another like Marcus says, we go against our human nature, and so our action results in a lack or lessening of virtue in our *hegemonikon.* So, by turning our backs on one another, we make our own rational souls worse - which is about the only way a person can harm themselves for the Stoics.

The Boons of Stoic Virtue

[16] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers,* 7.1.53, trans. C. D. Yonge 1915.

However, this is not the only way in which going against human nature is morally wrong. There is another sense in which acting against Nature is a form of self-harm. This stems from another Stoic idea about virtue - the idea that virtue is constitutive of happiness. Diogenes Laertius testifies that Cleanthes (one of the heads of the Stoic school following Zeno) claimed that "it is in [virtue] that happiness consists, and producing in the soul the harmony of a life always consistent with itself."[17] Diogenes Laertius also says of the chief good that: "this very thing is the virtue of the happy man and the perfect happiness of life when everything is done according to a harmony with the genius of each individual…." Between these two quotes, we can see that the Stoics took it that living a virtuous life would necessarily result in one living a happy life - because virtue is the sole constituent of happiness. Departing from virtue is not only problematic in that it affects the quality of our souls, but doing so is also choosing to depart from happiness. There are multiple sources of motivation to practice virtue - it is both in one's self interest and in the interest of the common good to pursue virtue. While the quotes from *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* tell us that virtue and happiness are identical, Epictetus talks more about how to actually obtain this happiness - and gives us an intuitive explanation of why this identity holds.

In chapter 8 of the *Enchiridion*, Epictetus tells us the following: "Don't seek that all that comes about should come about as you wish, but wish that everything that comes about should come about just as it does, and then you'll have a calm and happy life." This relates to the other passage we have taken from the *Enchiridion* - the one that stated the Dichotomy of Control. In that passage, Epictetus mentions desire as one of the things that is up to us. So, the Stoics take it

[17] Diogenes Laertius, *Live of Eminent Philosophers*, 7.1.53, trans. C. D. Yonge 1915.

that we can align our desires as we see fit.[18] Given that this is the case, we are able to only desire those things that we take it as appropriate to desire. However, given what the Stoics say in regard to the classic targets of desire such as wealth and fame, there seems to be very little that is actually appropriate for us to desire. The above passage provides us with at least some of those targets. We should not wish for any certain state of affairs or outcomes since those outcomes or states of affairs are almost certainly not going to be up to us. We should only desire that things happen the way that they are going to happen anyways.

However, that is not all. If we do this successfully, and we genuinely only desire for things to happen as they were going to anyways, then every external circumstance we come to face with is a case of something happening to us as it was going to anyways. This is exactly what we wanted! If we do as Epicetetus tells us, we will only have two targets of our desires: first, to act virtuously, and second, that things happen to us as they will. So, all of our desires are capable of being satisfied in any given moment. Not only do the Stoics have the argument that we ought to practice virtue due to the nature of the universe, but they also have the argument that one ought to practice virtue because it will inevitably result in all of your desires being satisfied. Even if one is not convinced that satisfaction of desire begets happiness, there is an additional motivator. The Stoics hold that desires are one of (or at least determined in some way by) the states of the soul. We already know that virtue is a disposition of the soul. Putting these two ideas together, virtue is the disposition of the soul to target its desires appropriately to those things within our control. As mentioned before, virtue is identical with happiness according to

[18] The Stoics do not go so far as to deny that we have sudden cravings or appetites that are not up to us, but they claim that desire is distinct from these, and classify sudden cravings as passions, which must undergo further cognitive processing to become full fledged desires. It is those cognitive processes that we have control over.

the Stoics. So, for the Stoics, happiness requires us to have the correct desires, due to the nature of virtue rather than the nature of happiness or desires.

However, all of this discussion has only dealt with how one should act in regard to one's self when practicing Stoic virtue. This is only one way that we must live in accord with human nature. The Stoics hold that humans are "by nature suited to form unions, states, and societies."[19] They support this claim by observing that across cultural and national boundaries, humans have formed communities, societies, and cities almost pervasively. This social behavior is far more pervasive than many of the other classic properties people attribute to human nature - greed, frustration, hopefulness, etc. We have yet to address the question of how one lives in accord with this social nature - how one acts in the social dimension of one's life. The Stoics tend to view the universe - at least the class of rational agents within it - as a singular community. This is evident from the passage cited earlier in this chapter from Plutarch: "we should regard all men as fellow-citizens and local residents, and there should be one way of life and order, like that of a herd grazing together and nurtured by a common law."[20] We ourselves are members of this rational community, and it is a part of living in accord with our social nature that we make positive contributions to this community. But there is also a different dimension to this. We know that due to the fact that we are rational, we are members of a sort of 'rational community' - a community of all and only rational beings. Furthermore, we find ourselves in this community simply due to the fact that we are rational beings. So, it follows from being rational that we find ourselves in this rational community. So, all the other rational beings - insofar as they are rational - also find themselves in this rational community. Since they possess the same sort of

[19] Cicero, *On ends*, 3.62-8, **57F** in Long & Sedley 1987.
[20] Plutarch, *On the fortune of Alexander* 329 A - B, **67A** in Long & Sedley 1987.

rationality that we do, we can infer that what involves living in accord with their rational nature is the same as what it involves for us to live in accord with our rational nature.

This allows us to say a lot about the implications of our membership in this rational community. We know that all other rational beings which are members of the universal rational community are also obligated to live in accord with their rational nature. As stated earlier, living in accord with our rational nature is a key component of virtue. We have already established why a given rational being ought to pursue virtue. So, since the other members of the rational community are constituted in such a way that they should pursue virtue, we know what virtue constitutes (to some degree) for those other rational beings.We also know that humans are essentially rational animals, and so members of this rational community. From the fact that they are human, we can reference our earlier arguments to establish that they both can and should practice virtue. Marcus Aurelius echoes this thought in chapter 42 of book 6 of the *Meditations*: "All of us are working on the same project. Some consciously, with understanding, some without knowing it." The claim here is even stronger than we have stated so far. Not only are all rational beings attempting to live virtuously if they have already consciously departed on the path, but those who have yet to realize it are also inadvertently doing so. Those unaware people are still under the same obligation and possess the same incentive to practice virtue. This is to say that people have a reason to practice virtue - whether they realize it or not. Even if I am unaware that exercise is the key to my physical health, I still have a reason to exercise, whether I admit it or not. Virtue is the key to achieving one's desires, and this stems from a point discussed earlier - that happiness and virtue are identical. So, those who are pursuing happiness, even incorrectly, are unintentionally pursuing virtue. Combining this claim with the claim that rational beings

pursue happiness allows us to conclude that all rational beings are pursuing virtue, at least indirectly or unintentionally.

While we have discussed the source of our social nature and membership in the rational community, we have yet to answer the question of what it means to live in accord with that social nature and the fact that we are in the rational community. The fact that every other rational being is at least indirectly pursuing virtue gives us sufficient grounding for at least one solid ethical principle. Insofar as virtue involves recognizing things for what they are and acting appropriately, we are morally obligated to appropriately respond to the rational nature of the other rational animals we encounter. Doing so, as Marcus tells us above, is cooperating with them and helping them to pursue their own virtue. So, helping members of the rational community on their path to virtue is not only beneficial for fostering the virtue of those community members, but it also plays a role in fostering our own virtue. By fostering virtue in the members of our rational community, we are living in accord with Nature, for it was Nature that placed us in this rational community to begin with - and gave us the capacity to recognize the rationality of those around us and respond appropriately by cooperating with them.

There are additional consequences of this concept of Nature placing us into a community. The rational community is not the only community that we find ourselves in. Just as we are coincidentally rational beings, we are all born into certain circumstances. We find ourselves in a particular place, composed of a particular body, with particular abilities and rational faculties. These stem from Nature's place for us. However, we also find ourselves born as members of other communities. We are born into a certain family, we are born in a certain country, in a certain city, and all of these communities are genuine components of Nature, and our membership in them has implications similar to those of our membership in the rational

community. Fostering virtue in the rational community is a way of fostering our own virtue - since virtue is living in accord with Nature and Nature has placed us into that community. The same is true of smaller communities such as families, and local communities. Nature has placed us into these communities, so we should foster virtue in these communities as part of living in accord with Nature. However, there is another level to this that hasn't been discussed yet. Just as fostering virtue in a community is part of our virtue as a member of that community, so it is for all other members of that community. Given this common element between members, part of fostering the virtue of any given community member would be to teach them or otherwise help them to also foster virtue in other members of the community.

But, there is a bit of a concern here. In addition to our rationality and social nature, we are born with a number of other properties - such as my green eyes and brown hair. Additionally, there are even more specific properties that we have - such as the number of hairs on my head, or the particular shade of my skin. The concern is that these properties are also allotted to us by Nature, and are therefore something we need to live in accord with. Perhaps part of my practicing virtue is that I behave as befits a person with green eyes, or a person with an odd number of hairs on my head. If the Stoics hold that these properties are morally significant, then Stoicism may be in trouble, as it seems that these mundane properties are somehow as morally important as our rational nature. Thankfully, there is a solution. As mentioned towards the beginning of this section, Stoic virtue can be thought of as involving an element of metaphysical recognition and appropriately responding to that recognition. In the case of accidental properties we are properly able to recognize them as such. This recognition tells us about the nature of these properties. If we are acting fully rationally, we will recognize that these accidental properties place us into certain groups that require no participation from their members. Additionally, there

are essential properties that behave this way. There is no notion of excellence corresponding to having an odd number of hairs, green eyes, or being a real thing. To act appropriately given that I have green eyes, have an odd number of hairs, or exist is simply to possess the relevant property - something I am already doing, and have no choice but to do. However, there are certain facts about humanity that do have consequences for our moral practices.

Virtue and Human Rational Capacity

One such fact is our finite or fallible nature as humans. As it stands, we have a particularly demanding conception of virtue for human beings. It seems that in order to be virtuous, we need to simultaneously help every member of every one of our communities on the path to virtue. Fortunately, the Stoics are aware that this is not humanly possible, and can account for it by appealing to our human nature. This creates a distinction between the types of virtuous agents a Stoic might talk about. While all agents should pursue the virtues of the Sage, we must equally recognize that not all agents are Sages. As a matter of fact, it is likely that no agent currently is, and one cannot become a Sage immediately. Thus, most agents in the world are either not consciously pursuing virtue, or progressing towards the ideal of the Sage. There are those agents who are either merely existing, or have accepted some other goal in life - pursuing wealth, fame, or other things outside of our control. Then, there are those people who pursue virtue as such, and recognize consciously that virtue is the only good. For the purposes of this thesis, this latter class of agents will be referred to as *progressors*.

These progressors are still bound by this finite human nature when we are attempting to live a virtuous life. Part of that human nature is that we are limited in a certain sense. We, as part of our human nature, are incapable of investing our full efforts in each and every person in the world simultaneously. Furthermore, this fact is one we need to live in accord with in order to

actually practice virtue. So, when attempting to foster virtue in the rational community, we need to prioritize. As such, we need access to certain information in order to form a good metric on which to prioritize. Formation of a good metric would require us to know which members of the rational community are lacking in virtue and to what degree, so that we can assess which course of action would lead to the greatest increase in the community's virtue. This requires us to have a certain type of knowledge about the members of our communities. However, we have yet to touch on how one has knowledge for the Stoics. This process is one of the more convoluted areas of Stoic doctrine, but is a key element of living a virtuous life.

For the Stoics, "Knowledge is the leading part of a soul in a certain state."[21] Like virtue, knowledge is a state of the *hegemonikon*, which is what is meant by the *leading* part of the soul. However, that doesn't tell us when we do and do not have knowledge. We can only say that we have knowledge when "the perception of what is seen, never deviates from the truth."[22]

In a truly shocking turn of events, Stoics also have a rather particular conception of how perception works. To sum it up, our mind receives *impressions* of things, and we either reject or accept those impressions. Stoic impressions are a peculiar concept, but they can be thought of as appearances. When we receive an impression of something, the content of that impression is the way that things *appear* to be. We basically check that impression against a set of rationally verified principles about the world, and either assent or dissent to the impression based on how it fares. It is worth noting that these principles are also received by assent to the right kind of impression. Only if we assent to it does the impression become a genuine sense perception, otherwise it is removed from our 'mental space', so to speak - impressions that we dissent to cannot become the basis of a desire, aversion, impulse or opinion. Impressions that accurately

[21] Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, 2.81, **33P** in Long & Sedley 1987.
[22] Diogenes Laertius, *Live of Eminent Philosophers*, 7.1.35, trans. C. D. Yonge 1915.

reflect reality and are assented to become *pieces* of knowledge, and remain in the mind of virtuous agents, be they Sages or progressors. But, this is only one sense of Stoic knowledge. The agent in this picture also possesses knowledge as a state.

Knowledge as a state is best described as being obtained by an agent when they only assent to impressions that are true. But, this type of knowledge has a particular significance to the Stoics. Seneca writes that "Wisdom is the human mind's good brought to perfection. Philosophy is the love and pursuit of wisdom; it strives for the goal which wisdom has achieved..."[23] The phrasing in this passage assigns both moral status to wisdom, and marks it as the goal of philosophy. This is striking due to the continuation of the passage: "Some have so defined wisdom as they call it scientific knowledge of the divine and the human. Others have defined it thus; wisdom is knowledge of the divine and the human and their causes."[24] Tying knowledge to wisdom by definition in this way gives knowledge the moral status and importance as the goal of philosophy that wisdom has. But knowledge needs to be more strictly defined for our purposes.

For one, we know that the Stoic Sage is always in this knowledge state, as they only assent to true impressions. This marks each of these impressions as pieces of knowledge, which in turn give the rational faculty of the Sage the knowledge state. But, progressors need to verify the truth of all their impressions. In a shocking twist, the Stoics also have a particular conception of when something is true. Diogenes Laertius reports that "[t]hey say that the proper criterion of truth is the comprehension; that is to say, one which is derived from a real object."[25]. This seems to follow a line of thought similar to more contemporary correspondence theories of truth.

[23] Seneca, *Letters* 89.4-5, **26G** in Long & Sedley 1987.
[24] Seneca, *Letters* 89.4-5, **26G** in Long & Sedley 1987.
[25] Diogenes Laertius, *Live of Eminent Philosophers*, 7.1.37, trans. C. D. Yonge 1915.

However, it remains unclear how we can actually tell when our impressions are properly derived from real objects, as that would require some sort of access to reality (this point will be addressed later in Chapter 2). Additionally, we do not have enough to explain when we receive impressions. Does sense perception qualify as a case of receiving an impression, and is that perception true? Can we receive the right kind of impression without sense perception? We need to be able to answer these questions in order to distinguish when we know something or do not know it.

As it turns out, the answer to both of these questions is yes, and both can be found in the testimony of Diogenes Laertius. In 7.1 (*the Life of Zeno*), he tells us that "The criterion by which the truth of facts is ascertained is a kind of perception."[26] In that very same portion of his work we are told that "From reason, that we derive the notions which result from a demonstration, those for instance which have for their object the existence of Gods, and of Divine Providence". These passages in conjunction paint an interesting picture for us. The first suggests that we can obtain impressions derived from real objects through sense perception. This is supported by the fact that knowledge is just to assent to only the right kind of impressions - those that accurately represent a real object, and can provide true beliefs about it. This passage simply tells us that this is possible. The second passage tells us that we can also receive these types of impressions from reason. This process in mind is almost certainly a dialectic process, where one works through the formal demonstrations of some of the core Stoic principles, and thereby receives a particular kind of 'cognitive' or 'kataleptic' impression[27]. This type of impression carries with it a sort of 'truth marker', as we know the truth of the impression due to its derivation from true principles. This cognitive impression compels the agent to assent, and seems to almost be automatically

[26] Diogenes Laertius, *Live of Eminent Philosophers*, 7.1.36, trans. C. D. Yonge 1915.
[27] 'Cognitive' is used as a translation of 'kataleptic' by Long &Sedley 1987. I follow suit throughout this thesis.

assented to by the mind when it is received. This has certain implications when it comes to cosmopolitan practices, but they will compose the bulk of the next chapter.

Some summary of this winding discussion of Stoic principles may assist the reader here. We have established that the Stoic conception of virtue is living in accord with Nature. Doing so involves recognizing what any object is, and then reacting appropriately. However, this vague principle is not enough to lead us to action - let alone virtuous action, so more explication of just what virtue involves is warranted. Fostering your own virtue involves metaphysical recognition of what you are - a rational, social being, in the communities that you find yourself in, including the universal, rational community. Part of appropriately responding to your membership in your communities is to also foster the virtue of the other members of your community, which requires an ability to evaluate these community members and see how far along they are in their pursuit of virtue. Doing so requires us to have a piece of knowledge of this person. How one might obtain this knowledge is the subject of the following chapter.

Chapter Two: Cosmopolitanism and Moral Evaluation

As it currently stands, we have discussed the Stoics standards of knowledge - the cognitive impression - and Stoic ethical practices. However, the connection between these two concepts requires further explications of their details. First, the "concentric circle" approach to Stoic cosmopolitanism must be discussed, and then the demand for moral evaluation in these practices will be clear. Second, how impressions become cognitive - and other sources of cognitive impressions - must be discussed before we can ask one crucial question: can the Stoic standard of knowledge be achieved in those cosmopolitan practices that require us to have it?

How do Stoics Know?

The end of the first chapter gave us a basic outline of the Stoic conceptions of knowledge. But, answering the question posed above will require us to clarify the specifics of their view. There seem to be two types of knowledge discussed by the Stoics: 'knowledge as a state', and individual beliefs which constitute knowledge. Diogenes Laertius details the state as follows : "[The Stoics] define knowledge itself as an assertion or safe comprehension, or habit, which in the perception of what is seen, never deviates from the truth"[28].This talk of it as a 'habit' is useful for us. We can understand knowledge as a state in terms of a habit of only assenting to true impressions. However, once assented to, a true impression becomes a true belief, which in turn for the Stoics becomes a piece of knowledge. 'Knowledge' is used both to refer to these pieces, as well as the habit or the state.

Additionally, there is much clarification to be done on the Stoic conception of impressions. As mentioned in the first chapter, one can think of impressions as being 'seemings',

[28] Diogenes Laertius, *Live of Eminent Philosophers* 7.1.35, trans. C. D. Yonge 1915. My brackets.

for lack of a better term - appearances of a certain state of affairs. This has a couple of implications for their status in Stoic ontology. The fact that impressions involve states of affairs ultimately ties them to propositions is a certain way, for Chrysippus defines a proposition as "...that which is true or false, or a complete state of affairs which, so far as itself is concerned, can be asserted…"[29]. This means that the state of affairs that is represented by any given impression is itself propositional. Furthermore, this state of affairs is the lone constituent of the content of the impression, meaning that all impressions have propositional content. Using the phrasing provided by the above Chrysippus passage, we can think of impressions as presenting the propositions that they have as their content. When I receive a sensory impression, it essentially presents to me that the relevant state of affairs obtains. However, the raw perceptual content itself is not enough to allow us to assent or dissent to the impression. The sense data itself is not enough to tell us whether the propositional content is true or false, but our minds interpret the sense data in such a way that we are able to determine whether or not the relevant proposition should be accepted as true or not .

Useful as this conception is, we are worried here primarily about cognitive impressions, and when we can accurately assess that a given impression is cognitive. Diogenes Laertius gives us a choice quotation here: "The cognitive, which they say is the criterion of things, is that which arises from what is and is stamped and impressed exactly in accordance with what is"[30]. So, cognitive impressions must arise from what is. Since the cognitive impressions arise from what is, they must be caused by reality in the right way. However, there is another piece to the puzzle, best explained by Sextus: "Of true impressions, some are cognitive, others not. Non-cognitive

[29] Diogenes Laertius, *Live of Eminent Philosophers*, 7.65. Trans C.D. Yonge, 1915.
[30] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 7.46 Trans C.D. Yonge, 1915.

ones are ones people experience when in abnormal states"[31]. Sextus recites the same definition of cognitive impressions as Diogenes Laertius above, adding on the criterion "of such a kind as could not arise from what is not"[32]. Not only do these impressions need to be causally connected with the actual state of affairs that they claim to represent, but they cannot be caused by anything that is not - any state of affairs that does not hold in actuality. Also, there is an emphasis seen in Sextus that certain factors in the agent are relevant for cognitivity - hence the emphasis on "people in abnormal states". The impressions need to be true, but also need to be taken in by a capable agent - which tracks with the idea that impressions need to be contextualized by an agent.

Sextus also provides useful clarification on the two basic criteria for a cognitive impression:

> First of all, its arising from what is; for many impressions have their origin in what is not, as happens with the insane, and these are not cognitive. Secondly, its both being from what it is and exactly in accordance with what is; for some impressions, though they are from what is, do not represent exactly what is, as for instance in the case of the insane Orestes…[33]

From this passage, we can gather two key types of non-cognitive impressions: those based on what is not, and those that do not represent exactly what is, either due to some issue in the clarity of impression,some missing piece of content in the impression, or some issue with the agent, as the emphasis on the 'insane Orestes' implies here. The first seems to be the most intuitive case, dealing with hallucinations or other types of illusion - if someone claims to perceive an elephant

[31] Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors*, **40E** 7.247-52, in Long and Sedley 1987.
[32] Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors*, **40E** 7.247-52, in Long and Sedley 1987.
[33] Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors*, **40E** 7.247-52, in Long and Sedley 1987.

in the room, but there is no such elephant, then their impression of an elephant is non-cognitive, and came from somewhere besides the state of affairs it represents. In the second case, the impressions may have the right content, but not be presented clearly. Say I perceive someone wearing a familiar outfit through a foggy bus window, and I interpret that as being my friend Emma. After attempting to wave to this person, I realize that it is not Emma, and my initial impression was non-cognitive - because it did not represent the features of this person clearly. The impression was not clear enough to determine that it was or was not Emma who I saw. This gives us a basic, working distinction between impressions: the cognitive, desirable impressions arise from what is and accurately and exactly represent the state of affairs that caused them. Furthermore, these impressions are of such a kind that they could not have possibly come about from a state of affairs that does not obtain - they cannot arise from what is not. Non-cognitive, undesirable impressions either arise from what is not, or do arise from what is and merely fail to fully or clearly represent their cause. An epistemically good agent - one who has made a habit of knowledge - ought to only assent to cognitive impressions. With this usable epistemic distinction, let us return to the ethical side of things.

The Cosmopolis and Agents

The type of ethical obligations we are concerned with are those ‘cosmopolitan’ obligations possessed by a Stoic agent. As discussed earlier, the Stoics hold that we have moral obligations to the entire universe - stemming out of our belonging in different communities. One has obligations to their family based on their membership in it, and one has obligations to all people due to our common rational nature - which places us in a human community. Furthermore, one has obligations to Nature itself, due to the fact that we share in its rationality. This places us in a community with Nature itself - the community of all rational beings. All of

these ‘placements’ are properties that we possess - they are simply physical and/or metaphysical facts about us, and where we are in the universe. However, these facts are themselves something that happens to us by Nature, and thus we have to live in accord with them. This gives us an obligation to respond appropriately to all of our communities, and those people within them.

The number of humans in the world as well as other potentially rational beings is astronomically large, and according to this cosmopolitan view, we have an obligation to each one of them. This multitude of obligations should already sound rather daunting to the average moral agent. As a reminder from the last chapter, the obligation we are under to our communities is to foster virtue in them - the particular course of action that fosters virtue is going to be different in almost every community. This contextual variance stems from the formulation of Stoic virtue: to live in accord with those things that happen by Nature. The context itself - what circumstances or communities we find ourselves in - is one of the many things we need to live in accord with, and living in accord with the context is simply to recognize it for what the context is, and then responding appropriately to it. For example, members of a family are in their particular family by circumstance, and therefore due to Nature. So, each member of the family must live in accord with their membership in the family, by performing the actions fitting of a virtuous family member, and encouraging the other members to do the same - thereby fostering virtue in the family as a whole. Family duties may vary from household chores to providing emotional support in times of need, and all of these are necessary to be a virtuous family member.

One can think of one’s family as constituting the first of many circles around the self, representing the communities we find ourselves in. We also have obligations to ourselves - namely, to live in accord with our own nature. That involves recognizing ourselves for what we are, and responding appropriately. I am currently a philosophy MA candidate, so I owe it to

myself to respond appropriately to that fact - perhaps by finishing this thesis, and thus completing my degree. Similarly, I have the sort of familial obligations mentioned above to my family - since I am a member of my family. The same can be said for the other larger communities that I am a member of. I have obligations to the community of the CSU Department of Philosophy, for I am a member of that community. I have obligations to my particular cohort, as well as the other graduate students as a whole. Similarly, I have obligations to the citizens of Fort Collins, due to my residency here. I have obligations to the citizens of Colorado, the citizens of The United States as a whole, etc. One can think of each of these communities constituting a distinct 'circle', resulting in a layering of gradually larger circles, with my own *hegemonikon* constituting the center of all of these circles.

However, identifying and attending to these circles is not all that is required of the Stoic's wise, virtuous role model - or 'Sage'. The Stoic Hierocles, to whom we owe the imagery of circles used above, describes the proper course of action as follows: "...it is the task of a well tempered man, in his proper treatment of each group, to draw the circles together somehow towards the centre…"[34]. The idea, roughly speaking, is that each of these divisions between communities is ultimately unnecessary. The wise man, given his epistemic capacities, is able to recognize the properties by which our communities are separated (e.g., physical location, family history, dialect, etc…) as mere circumstances, and thus something not up to them. Given that this is the case, the virtuous response is to instead treat people as members of a community that is based on far more important properties - namely, rationality. Given this, the Stoics hold that "[it] is incumbent on us to respect people from the third circle as if they were those from the second, and again to respect our other relatives as if they were those from the third circle"[35]. The idea

[34] Stobaeus, 4.671,7 - 673,11, **57G** in Long and Sedley 1987.
[35] Stobaeus, 4.671,7 - 673,11, **57G** in Long and Sedley 1987.

behind this explanation from Hierocles is that we ought to respect all people - regardless of which circle they are in - with equal concern and affection as our family members, due to the fact that a member of our family and any other person have an equal share of our common rationality.

While this imagery is consistent with Stoic cosmopolitanism, it is not necessarily the only way of explicating the concept. However, the imagery of concentric circles plays an important role here. There is one important fact that must be kept in mind: human beings are limited, both ontologically and epistemically. Human beings are finite, leading lives with a limited duration. We have a limited amount of time to live our lives, and as such we are limited in our capacity to live virtuously. Also, humans are limited in the amount of information that we are able to process at a given time. There is a ceiling on the amount we can process at a given time, and we are limited in how much time we have. Humans cannot complete an infinite list of tasks, process a limitless amount of information, and so on. We are fundamentally limited.

This is notably different from when we look at the universe itself. It seems that there is an almost infinite (if not literally infinite) amount of things in the universe. Regardless of whether or not one believes that the universe is or is not fundamentally limited, it suffices to say that human life is of an inadequate span to fully experience everything in the universe. Similarly, there is a seemingly limitless number of facts and pieces of information in the universe. The universe contains both a seemingly unlimited number of things, and a similarly massive number of facts about those things. Any human being cannot live in accord with all of those facts and things, as we cannot even experience or come to know all of them - let alone respond appropriately to them. It seems then that the Stoic definition of virtue as living in accord with Nature is an unfair standard - one not achievable by any limited human being. If we have obligations stemming from our membership in every community, and there is a limitless number

of things we are in communities with, we will never be able to meet all of those obligations as fundamentally limited beings.

However, the Stoic Sage would be aware of the limited nature of humans, the massive nature of the universe, and our subsequent inability to experience or come to know it all.. The Sage would understand that there is a vast multitude of obligations they have to the world and those beings in it. But, they would also not forget the most fundamental Stoic moral imperative: to live in accord with Nature. According to the Stoics, Nature is responsible for all of the facts in the universe, and their relationships to each other. So, the Sage would recognize that living in accord with Nature involves living in accord with those facts and those relationships. One example of this is those two facts we mentioned: humans are limited, but we face a number of moral obligations that we simply do not have the time or the epistemic capacity to handle in a single lifetime. Furthermore, both of these things are true at the same time - they are concurrent. The concurrence of these two facts puts the Stoic Sage in a difficult position: they need to meet as many of these moral obligations as they can, while still living in accord with the fact that we cannot meet them all.

Cosmopolitanism and Prioritization

We return now to the concentric circle model. The reader will hopefully recall that one's self - one's *hegemonikon* - composes the center of the concentric circle model. Additionally, we have obligations to ourselves - namely, we must live in accord with our own natures. As the Stoics claim and as we have established, it is in our nature to be limited in both a temporal and epistemic fashion. Since this fact is part of our nature, we need to live in accord with this fact in order to live virtuously. That involves a recognition of our own limits, and an appropriate response to those limits. It is here that we can return to the Dichotomy of Control: if it is not up

to us, it is not morally valuable, and therefore not a proper target of desires. It is not up to us that we are limited, and it is consequently not up to us whether or not we can meet a lofty moral standard that requires infinite epistemic or temporal capacities. Since it is not in our control to meet the lofty standard, we do not have to meet that standard in order to be virtuous. Furthermore, we should not want to meet such a lofty standard - for to hold that as a target of desire is to go against and fail to recognize our own limited nature. Wanting to meet such a lofty moral standard is itself a way of failing to meet the more reasonable and possible moral standard mandated by our limited nature, and recognizing and striving to discover the appropriate standard is itself part of our virtue.

But there is an even further consequence of our limited nature in cosmopolitan ethics. The fact that we are limited means we cannot meet all of the moral obligations that we are under due to our membership in various communities. There are an infinite number of communities we find ourselves in, but our finite nature clearly prevents us from attending to all of them equally, and in a fully virtuous way. For this reason, living in accord with our limited nature requires us to recognize this fact - and come to terms with the fact that we cannot meet them all. If doing this is part of living in accord with Nature, then it seems to be virtuous. For the Stoics, the inability to perform an action can undermine an apparent moral obligation that we have to do it. Our limited nature prevents us from fulfilling the full set of cosmopolitan obligations, and so we are virtuous in lowering our intentions and standards from that lofty point. Essentially, this is the correct response to the tension between our limited nature and cosmopolitan obligations.

But, this fact does not mean that we are required to meet none of those obligations either. We are under a near infinite set of moral obligations, and we are unable to meet all of them. However, we have to meet some of them - because we are obviously capable of doing so. At

least some of our communities and the members within them should be targets for our cosmopolitan efforts. This means that if we are to get the most out of our lives by fostering the most virtue in our communities, we need to be able to prioritize. Just as we cannot simultaneously foster virtue in our immediate family and all the citizens of the United States at the same time, we cannot foster virtue in every citizen of the United States equally at the same time. By what metric can we prioritize - either among communities or members within them?

The answer to this question lies in the obligation we face as members of a given community. This obligation is always the same: to foster virtue in that community. This means that only contextual factors about the communities will matter for prioritization - because prioritizing itself is part of fulfilling our role as a community member. However, this is not super informative as to how one actually prioritizes. Here, there is an aspect to communities that we need to keep in mind: they are largely composed of their members. If the members of a group simply all refuse to cooperate with one another, then they are simply not a community. Even in communities with complex structures and multiple goals and priorities, those structures and goals rely on the participation of the community members. The quality of the community structure - whether it fosters or inhibits virtue - is going to be dependent on how the community members have constructed their community. The consequence of this is that the best or most virtuous communities are the ones with the best or most virtuous members, provided that those virtuous members are able to implement or influence the community structure.

What makes a virtuous community member, outside of fostering virtue in the members of their community? It is here that we return once again to the simplest definition of Stoic virtue: living in accord with Nature. A virtuous community member must live in accord with their nature as a community member, as well as the other constituents of their nature. We know that

the other members of our community are also human, and therefore also rational and social animals in the same way that we are. So, each community member must live in accord with many of the same circumstances that we do, insofar as we are rational beings. One such circumstance is the one shared between us - our membership in the particular community. The other community members may be required to do different things based on their station within a community, but the general obligations they face as a community member will be the same as ours. All of us must perform our roles in the community as part of living in accord with Nature. Note here that there can be vast degrees of difference in the particular actions a community member is required to do, but we all share a moral imperative of the form “do what is befitting a member of your community in your particular station”. This, combined with the obligation to foster virtue in your community, is the full obligation that a Stoic agent is under in a community.

For the sake of prioritization, there is a certain aspect of Stoic virtue that must be kept in mind: Stoic virtue (at least after a certain point) is self-sustaining - but this point could use a little explanation. Let us return to the Dichotomy of Control for a second, as it will provide some clarity here. The Dichotomy constitutes a sort of test for Stoic virtue, and anyone who fails this test is not virtuous. Any Stoic agent capable of executing these more nuanced community obligations will be able to do so while applying the Dichotomy. It essentially serves as a basic test of one’s capacity for virtue - without an understanding of it, one will not be capable of correctly applying whatever lessons or other support a virtuous agent may give them. Imagine we are attempting to foster virtue in someone who is already virtuous. Construing this in terms of the Dichotomy of Control, we can say that a virtuous person only chooses those things within their control as the targets of their desires, aversions, opinions, and impulses. But, these four things are within our control, and are also those things responsible for our moral character.

Putting these two together, the virtuous person would recognize that they are in control of their moral character or virtue. Furthermore, it is up to them to continue progressing in their virtue, and since virtue is good, it would also be the target of one of their desires. Any person who is virtuous in Stoic terms will possess the desire for self-improvement, regardless of whether or not they are Sages or progressors.

Another consequence of moral progress being in our control is that nothing outside of our control can entail an immoral or non-virtuous response in us. As a matter of fact, allowing something outside of our control to cause an inappropriate response in us is a direct violation of virtue. In this way, our efforts to foster virtue are unnecessary in the case of agents that are virtuous enough to have the desire for self-improvement. But, this point of self sufficiency does not require one to be the Stoic Sage. As a matter of fact, if someone can correctly act according to the Dichotomy of Control in all moments, then they would have reached this point of self sufficiency - and knowledge of the Dichotomy does not make one instantly a Sage. This level of virtue - correctly applying the Dichotomy of Control - will be referred to as 'the point of self sufficiency', and will essentially mark the point between one being non-virtuous, and one being a progressor for our purposes.

Now we must view the other side of the spectrum, a case in which we foster virtue in someone who is not virtuous. This person sets the targets of their desires as they see fit, rather than according to what is in their control. Additionally, this person may base their actions on unclear impressions and things outside of their control. When we attempt to foster virtue in this person, they may or may not behave in a way that appears virtuous, but perhaps not for the right reasons. Remember that we are concerned with their judgements, desires, aversion, and impulses, as well as their targets. If our agent starts to adjust their desires according to what is in

their control, but only because I tell them to, then what they are doing is behaving in a way that seems virtuous for the wrong kind of reasons. Since desires, aversions, impulses, and opinions are what is relevant for moral evaluation, behavior itself is not sufficient for virtue. The reason for action also matters. A person who successfully remains calm in the face of a tragedy, but only does so to earn my approval, is not emulating the Stoic Sage at all, but rather drifting farther and farther away from that ideal.

However, our virtuous agent would base their behavior not in my opinion or authority - but hopefully in the truth of the claims that I remind them of. They would not use my advice or my encouragement as a basis for their action because my encouragement and advice is not in their control. This is not to say they would reject such encouragement, but it should not be required for virtuous action. Also, this would be true of both progressors or the Sage. Our non-virtuous agent may struggle without my advice, and may be incapable of virtue without it. If a person truly has Stoic virtue, then my encouragement and advice would have no effect on their efforts to behave virtuously - because if they did, the person would be ever so slightly failing the test provided to us by the Dichotomy of Control - even if they made a such a simple judgement as "this is easier now due to the encouragement of my friend". This means that our cosmopolitan efforts can easily be unnecessary - a consequence that does not settle well with Marcus Aurelius who reminds himself of "how to act":

> Never under compulsion, out of selfishness, without forethought, with misgivings.
>
> Don't gussy up your thoughts.
>
> No surplus words or unnecessary actions...[36]

[36] Marcus Aurelis, *Meditations* 2.5. Trans. by Gregory Hays 2002.

Marcus takes it that unnecessary actions would be a violation of virtue - and therefore he should not do them. So, unnecessary cosmopolitan efforts would be a violation of virtue, meaning that if we are to be virtuous, we need to prioritize. Our cosmopolitan efforts are unnecessary if we direct them at someone who is already virtuous. This prioritization needs to be justified somehow on both a moral and epistemic level, due to the tight connection between knowledge and virtue.

Some concrete examples may help here. Consider two people: Preston and Garvey. Preston is a law enforcement officer, and Garvey is a first grade teacher, both living in a small town in Midwest America. Both Preston and Garvey are virtuous by the Stoic definition: they live in accord with Nature. For Preston, this involves being a good police officer, which requires him to adequately enforce the law, and to punish those who violate while making sure that none who follow it are punished. Garvey, however, lives in accord with Nature by performing his duties as a teacher well. This involves educating students in a curriculum agreed upon by his educational community, as well as fostering certain moral virtues in them. Furthermore, instilling pieces of knowledge in students is sure to lead to knowledge as a state. Since knowledge is a virtuous disposition of the soul, remaining in the knowledge state is essentially practicing virtue, which fosters further virtue in agents. Those virtuous agents then better the communities that they are in. So, Garvey's cosmopolitan duties are met through his teaching as well. Though Preston and Garvey both perform vastly different actions, they both fulfill the more general imperative of living in accord with their position in the world by fostering virtue in their communities.

It is here that we can discuss a necessary distinction between forms of fostering virtue in members of the community. For the Stoics, virtuous agents tend to foster virtue in their

communities both directly and indirectly. The direct methods tend to be the teaching of virtue, which is not necessarily an academic education, but more akin to the way friends can have a positive influence on each other when discussing how to deal with difficulties in life. The indirect method stems from the nature of virtue and our duty to meet it, and mostly involve an idea similar to leading by example. Diogenes Laertius tells us that duty is preferred, and "contains in itself reasonable arguments as to why we should prefer it, as for instance, its corresponding to the nature of life itself"[37]. This means that anyone who correctly or completely recognizes virtue for what it is also recognizes that it is to be desired. If the person who understands virtue is rational, then they will have a strong reason to depart on the path of virtue. This is the sort of "emanation of virtue" idea that is seen in some other virtue ethical systems, such as that of Confucius or Socrates.

Regardless of whether they foster virtue directly or indirectly, Preston and Garvey are both faced with the same tension recognized by the Stoic Sage - that we have an obligation to everyone, but are too limited of beings to meet all of those obligations. Similarly, they need to avoid unnecessary actions, which includes attempting to foster virtue in those community members that are already self-sufficient. Part of Preston and Garvey's practice of virtue is to progress towards the ideal of the Stoic Sage. Since the Sage would prioritize, Preston and Garvey also need to prioritize. For Preston, this involves aiming his direct cosmopolitan efforts towards criminals and encouraging their reform, until they reach the point of self-sufficiency. Attempting to reform criminals who are already willing and ready to reform themselves is a form of unnecessary action, and should be avoided.

[37] Diogenes Laertius, *Live of Eminent Philosophers*, 7.57. Trans C.D. Yonge, 1915.

Garvey addresses the issue in a slightly different way. It is quite difficult to assess which students would make the most of his efforts as a teacher. There will be students for whom the general lessons are sufficient, and those that require more attention than that. Garvey's class is relatively small due to the size of his community, so spending too much time on a starting point is not the best use of his efforts. For this reason, he can start with those students that are most struggling. However, once a student has reached the point of self sufficiency regarding the pursuit of their own education, then Garvey should prioritize his direct cosmopolitan efforts towards those students who have yet to reach this point, as attempting to foster virtue in those students that are self sufficient will serve as a form of unnecessary action. Furthermore, getting more students to the point of self sufficiency will serve as a more efficient means of educating the community as a whole, since more and more students will continue to become more virtuous on their own.

However, there is a particular difficulty in executing both of these methods of practicing virtue. In the cases of Preston and Garvey, they both are required to assess whether or not an agent is virtuous - and it is not totally clear within the Stoic corpus whether they hold this to be possible. There are multiple things we need to know here: what do we need to know in order to know someone is virtuous, and can we actually obtain that knowledge? Answering these questions in a way that is consistent with the Stoic versions of these concepts is going to require us to keep in mind many Stoic beliefs and principles.

First, we need to remember the Dichotomy of Control. One conclusion drawn from this principle is that only those things that are up to us - those things that are within our control- are morally acceptable targets of our desires, impulses, aversions and judgements. Only things within our control matter for whether or not we are virtuous. Now, let us return to the specific

assertion of the Dichotomy of Control: that only our impulses, opinions, desires, and aversions are up to us[38]. The faculty responsible for all of these things is the faculty of reason, which the Stoics locate within our ruling center - the *hegemonikon*. So, in order to assess whether or not a person is virtuous, we need to examine their *hegemonikon*, and those relevant states within it. But, there is a further question to be asked here: what is required before one is morally justified in acting on these assessments? Is it enough to believe that someone is relatively in need of guidance, and has departed from Nature, or is knowledge required for acting on those judgements?

The answer, as the Stoics argue, is the latter. Like many of their beliefs, this can be derived from their rational first principles. As has been established, the soul (more specifically, the *hegemonikon*) is that which is responsible for opinions, desires, aversions, and impulses. The category of impulses plays a specific role here - as they are essentially individual acts of assent to impressions, with the content that a particular course of action is to be performed. Assenting to these acts leads to a judgement that the action is to be performed, upon the possession of which we attempt to perform the action. These acts of assent serve as the basis for an agent's actions, but the action is not always within the agent's control. The success of a given action can be and often is dependent upon external factors. One feature of this difference is that the Stoics evaluate actions based on the impulses associated with them, not the outcome of the action itself.

Impulses are required for actions according to the Stoics, and impulses are found in the *hegemonikon,* so it follows that a *hegemonikon* is required for action. However, the second point in favor of this answer is the fact that the only aspects of our virtue are those things that are up to us. Since the *hegemonikon* is both the source of our actions and our virtues, it would follow that

[38] Paraphrased from *Enchiridion* I.1, trans. Robin Hard 2014.

a virtuous *hegemonikon* begets virtuous action. Finally, the Stoics hold that "knowledge is the leading part of the soul in a certain state"[39], meaning they define knowledge in terms of what is within the *hegemonikon* - reason. The Stoics define knowledge itself as a state of the *hegemonikon*, so one can evaluate whether or not one has knowledge based on one's *hegemonikon*. Additionally, we are directly advised by Marcus that knowledge is required for certain forms of moral evaluation: "Go straight to the seat of intelligence - your own, the world's, your neighbor's. Your own - to ground it in justice. The world's - to remind yourself what it is that you're a part of. Your neighbor's - to distinguish ignorance from calculation. And recognize it as like yours"[40]. The 'seat of intelligence' referenced by Marcus is a phrase often used to describe the *hegemonikon*, along with the phrase 'ruling centre'. This tells us what we need to know about in order to move forward.

Meeting the Standard of Knowledge in Moral Evaluation

So, in order to act on our assessments of the members of our community, we need to have knowledge about the presence or lack of virtue in their souls - knowledge here referring to that state of the leading part of the soul. Marcus recommends we do exactly this by suggesting that we "distinguish ignorance from calculation". Here we must turn to the Stoic standards of knowledge, under which there are several prerequisites. First, we must receive an impression of the correct object. Second, that impression must itself be cognitive - it must be the right kind of impression to result in knowledge. Only then can we truly know whether it is ignorance or calculation that drives someone. Essentially, to have knowledge we must receive the correct kind of impression, then process that impression in the appropriate way. It is here that the reader is

[39] Sextus Empiricus, PH 2.80, in Long & Sedley 1987
[40] Marcus Aurelis, *Meditations* 9.22. Trans Gregory Hays 2002.

likely noticing how much has been smuggled into this paragraph, and that reader will now receive the appropriate explanation.

Our access to cognitive impressions can be a bit mysterious - and this is the point where the Stoics faced the most attack from their Pyrrhonist and Academic opponents. The core mystery for the skeptics is how an agent is actually supposed to be able to detect the cognitive nature of the impressions, without merely assuming that they already know the impressions to be cognitive. The skeptics often argued that there was no grounding for the distinction between cognitive and non-cognitive impressions, and some skeptics would argue that in fact, no impressions are cognitive, and therefore no impression should be assented to. However, it is not my purpose to recite the views of Sextus Empiricus and his school here. What we are concerned with is the conditions or causes of cognitive impressions and how we might go about obtaining them in cases of moral evaluation. We need not worry about the metaphysical nature of the cognitive impression - we only need access to them in our evaluation here[41].

Here, we can turn to the writings of Diogenes Laertius, who once again gives us what we need to answer this core question:

> It is by sense perception, they [the Stoics] hold, that we get cognition of white and black, rough, and smooth, but it is by reason that we get cognition of conclusions reached through demonstration, such as the gods' existence and their providence.[42]

This passage gives us two of the most important cases of cognitive impressions there are: first, in the case of sense perceptions of material objects, and secondly, the conclusions reached through demonstrations - basically, the conclusions of sound arguments. Due to the propositional nature of

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[41] There is quite a lot more to say about cognitive impressions here, but I wish to shelve that discussion for now, as it is extremely relevant to the beginning of the following chapter.

[42] Diogenes Laertius, *Live of Eminent Philosophers* 7.52. Trans C.D. Yonge, 1915.

impressions, we know that both of these types of things are propositional states of affairs. Basically, it seems we can have cognitive impressions by direct sense perception of an object, or by proving the truth of an impression's content through a sound logical derivation.

This two-category list, however, is exhaustive of the means by which to obtain cognitive impressions. The Stoic conception of the faculties of the mind results in all of the rational faculties (those which exclusively can be virtuous or unvirtuous) being contained within sense perception and reason. So, we have two more specific inquiries now: can we have a sense perception of the soul, or can we logically derive an impression of the soul? We need to remember our main purpose here is to evaluate the moral status of individuals in a community in order to prioritize our moral efforts within that community. This informs the standard of what we need in order to justify our prioritization - we need impressions of the particular souls - that is, the specific *hegemonikon* - of the members of our communities. This fact makes it difficult to obtain those impressions, at least by means of logical derivation. The Stoics have plenty of choice arguments demonstrating the existence of the soul, the fact that it is responsible for the faculty of reason, and so on. But, each of these derivations conclude a universal proposition about souls as a category. We could derive certain conclusions about a particular soul from these universal propositions, but only about those qualities mentioned earlier - its existence, its responsibility for reason, its connection with its particular body. Truths about souls must be either entirely derived from rational truths about those souls, or based on sense perceptions of things related to the soul. One example of such a thing is the behaviors that the soul produces, and perhaps through them, we can evaluate someone's virtue.

Here, we once again return to the Dichotomy of Control. The four categories said to be truly morally valuable are desires, aversion, impulses, and judgements. There is no mention of behavior as morally significant, but we know it is. The connection between behavior and what is

morally valuable comes in the form of impulses, which are those things we decide to carry into action. Impulses are roughly similar to intentions. Basically, the Stoics value intentions and this has one specific consequence: it avoids the worry of a sort of ‘counterpart’ of virtue. From a common sense viewpoint, we can only directly perceive the behaviors produced by the soul, and not the soul itself. The worry here is that virtuous behavior - such as assenting the right impressions, behaving temperately, being modest, etc., could all come about coincidentally as a result of non-virtuous motivations. One could treat others well out of a desperate desire for their approval, or help someone only with the intent of using that help as leverage later on. Any person performing these actions is clearly not progressing towards Sagehood, and therefore must not be virtuous. But, their behaviors indicate that they are virtuous. So without a means to evaluate their intentions - which fall under the ‘impulses’ mentioned in the Dichotomy of Control - we cannot actually evaluate their moral status, as we cannot gain a cognitive impression of that person’s morally relevant features - their impulses, desires, aversions, and judgements.

Additionally, the same concern applies to any other sort of perceptible product of someone’s soul. The words they speak and what they do can often be caused by virtuous motivations, but the fact that they are not exclusively caused by the virtuous qualities of the soul means that we cannot infer the presence of virtue in a particular soul based on our perceptions of virtuous words, behaviors, or any other sort of perceptible result of the soul. To do so would be akin to believing it is raining based on the fact that the ground is wet, and such a belief would never be held by a virtuous Stoic agent, as it would require assent to an impression that is non-cognitive. So, logical derivations about a particular soul or sense perceptions of its results serve as an inadequate justification for a moral evaluation of that soul, and therefore, the person who it

belongs to. It seems then our best option to acquire a cognitive impression of a person's soul is through sense perception of the soul itself, not merely its products.

In most metaphysics involving the soul or the mind, it is often the case that the mind or soul cannot be perceived by the senses, as a consequence of their most fundamental properties. But in the case of Stoic metaphysics, no such assumption is warranted. The Stoics have reasons to believe that the soul is a corporeal body, which "fall within a general conceptual framework that denies anything can exist which is not a body or a state of a body"[43]. For Stoics, only bodies or states of bodies are real things. This form of tight connection between reality and bodies means that if the soul is real, it must be a body or a state of a body. However, the Stoics hold that the soul persists beyond the death of the body, meaning that it cannot be a mere state of the body. The soul, according to the Stoics, is itself a body.

So, can this body be perceived? The Stoics seem to hold that at least in some sense, it can. Marcus advises us to enter the consciousness of our neighbors in the earlier passage from book 9 of *Meditations*. Additionally, Diogenes Laertius mentions the exact sort of investigation we are concerned with here:

> The topic which examines into causes they say is also divisible into two parts; and with reference to one of its considerations, the investigations partake of it, according to which it is that they investigate the dominant principle of the soul and the things which exist in the soul …[44]

Here, the claim is even stronger than Marcus'. By specifically mentioning the 'dominant principle' of the soul, Diogenes seems to suggest that the Stoics held that the investigation of the *hegemonikon* itself is in fact possible.

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[43] Long 1982, pp. 36

[44] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 7.67. Trans C.D. Yonge, 1915.

However, Diogenes Laertius may be referring to the investigation of the *hegemonikon* in general, and this is supported by the fact that he references "the topic which examines into causes". Stoic logic is incredibly closely linked to their conception of causation, and so it should come as no surprise that the examination of causes would also take the form of logical derivations. Earlier, it was explained that Stoic arguments are about the soul generally, but not specific souls. Given this, we know that logical derivations about the soul can grant us cognitive impressions of the nature of the soul and the *hegemonikon* in general, but cannot grant us the cognitive impressions we need of particular souls and their virtue.

So, we are once again stuck with the project of acquiring a sense perception of the soul. This requires us to know how exactly the soul and body are related in Stoicism, which for lack of a better term, gets a bit weird. As mentioned, the soul and body are both corporeal bodies for the Stoics, but both seem to occupy the same space. The Stoics hold that this is due to the particular relation between the soul and body, which is a relation known as 'total mixture'. This relation is best explicated by Alexander of Aphrodisias:

> Two or more bodies are extended through one another as wholes through wholes, in such a way that each of them preserves its own substance and qualities in a mixture of this kind… For it is the special feature of things which are blended that they can be separated again from one another; and this can only take place if the things blended preserve their own natures in the mixture.[45]

So given this relation, we can say that the soul and body are co-extensive, but that each of their qualities are entirely preserved in this mixture. Our perceptions of other people are not perceptions of something that is part soul and part body, but rather something that is all soul and

[45]Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Mixture*, p. 216.28-31. Cited by Long 1982, pp. 39.

all body, with the full properties of each of those substances expressing their qualities in its entirety.

So what does this mean for our project of perceiving the soul? The crux of the above passage for answering this question is "each of them preserves its own substance and qualities in a mixture of this kind". It seems that the lack or presence of virtue in a particular *hegemonikon* leads to certain properties that arise in the greater soul. Since the soul and body only appear in the world as a total mixture that constitutes the human being, we mostly see the soul present itself through behavior. So, we might just perceive the *hegemonikon* through behavior. However, the answer is not so simple here. There is one fundamental property of the *hegemonikon* that poses an issue for the idea that the *hegemonikon* is perceivable: its distinctness. I don't mean just that the *hegemonikon* is a special, unique entity, but rather that it is *causally* distinct. This is a consequence of the Dichotomy of Control. Since our *hegemonikon* is up to us, it cannot be causally necessitated by any external force, so it would not be able to be necessitated by its relation to the body. Forces can certainly attempt to influence the *hegemonikon*, but it ultimately has the power to assent or dissent to any impressions it receives - even from the body. Additionally, the body is specifically mentioned as being out of our control in the passage explaining the dichotomy of control.

How do we reconcile the distinctness of the *hegemonikon* with the passage from Alexander of Aphrodisias? Other scholars have considered the issue and formulated helpful distinctions. One such commentator is A.A. Long. In his paper "Soul and Body in Stoicism", Long explains that the term soul can be used to refer to many different things in Stoic ontology. Long tells us that "[Animals] are compounds of what I shall call a flesh and bones body and a

specific soul body”[46]. However, animals are notably lacking in rationality and therefore the rational soul, or the *hegemonikon*. This distinction provides us with the necessary information to explain the Alexander passage. Alexander seems to comment on the preservation of the substance and qualities of the specific soul body. But, the *hegemonikon* is also related to the body through total mixture. But, one of the most fundamental properties of any *hegemonikon* is its distinctness. Total mixture inhibits our sense perception of the *hegemonikon* because our sense will perceive the mixture, not merely the soul. Furthermore, even if it could present itself in that way, we would not be able to distinctly recognize the properties of the *hegemonikon*, for the qualities of our physical body would also be entirely preserved, and would muddle our perception of the *hegemonikon*. We might perceive the *hegemonikon* in some way, but we would be perceiving it as entangled with the body, such as in cases of observing behavior. We have already established that a perception of behavior cannot ground moral evaluations due to the counterfeit worry. Quite simply, we cannot perceive the impulses, desires, aversion, and opinions of an agent in a way that avoids both the counterfeit worry and the metaphysical worry - that we would never receive an impression of the correct state of affairs at all.

Even if we can get a perception of the *hegemonikon*, we will not be able to perceive it as distinct from the body, and therefore we cannot get a direct sense perception to give us a cognitive impression of someone’s particular *hegemonikon* or its virtue. Combining that conclusion with the earlier conclusion that logical derivations cannot give us cognitive impressions of a particular soul, it seems that we in fact cannot obtain a cognitive impression of someone’s virtue or lack of virtue, as we cannot perceive those things that are up to them. Given that this is the case, we cannot effectively prioritize our cosmopolitan efforts. But, we need to

[46] Long 1982, pp. 42

prioritize given our limited nature as humans. All of this hints that we, as human beings, will never be able to be effective cosmopolitan agents.

This impossibility is notably different from some of the concerns previously mentioned. Like prioritizing our cosmopolitan efforts, we are also incapable of fostering virtue in every agent in the universe. However, the virtue problem was more shrugged off than the cosmopolitan paralysis issue. This is ultimately due to how dependent these issues are on the Stoic world view. The core premises involved in the impossibility of fostering virtue in every agent revolved around the idea that the universe was either unlimited or extremely massive, and the limitations of human life that fail to meet that aspect of the universe. These are much more generally accepted ideas, and one hardly needs to be a Stoic to have these premises as part of their world view. The ideas involved in the impossibility of prioritization are much more Stoic in nature. These range from the idea that knowledge is obtained from assent to cognitive impressions, to the total mixture view of the body and mind. These ideas are much more near and dear to the Stoic world view, and require accepting much more of the Stoic view before they are believed. The cosmopolitan paralysis is an issue for Stoics caused by the Stoic world view.

Returning to our core issue, there may be other cases in which this strict epistemology leads to paralysis, where we cannot perform seemingly morally required actions. The source of the issue here is that progressors cannot ground their actions in a morally justified way without possessing knowledge, due to their lack of access to a viable cognitive impression. This case is almost certainly not the only case where progressors lack knowledge, and the problem would seem to present itself in other cases where direct sense perception is required but unavailable. Furthermore, this means that progressors - even though they abide by Stoic virtue and therefore imitate the Sage, lack the knowledge they need to possess wisdom. This point, as established in

the first chapter, means that Stoic agents, whilst still abiding by trusted Stoic epistemic principles, do not achieve the goal of philosophy. The moral status of wisdom as the "human mind's good brought to perfection"[47] should give pause to any Stoic. Additionally, the epistemic requirements limit wisdom itself - which is a far more general phenomena than cases of cosmopolitan evaluation. This seems to suggest there are some other cases where wisdom would be impossible due to the lack of knowledge.

It seems that not only Stoic cosmopolitanism but Stoic epistemic practices as a whole have backed themselves into a bit of a corner due to some of their own requirements, but I hold that the practices can still be preserved with a bit of theoretical modifications on the part of the Stoics. Furthermore, such a modification is *prima facie* justified by the status of wisdom as the goal of philosophy, and its impossibility in these scenarios. If the philosophical principles cannot help progressors abiding by those principles achieve wisdom and therefore virtue, then those principles should be called into question by those progressors. As a matter of fact, questioning this principle seems to be a form of progress. This questioning is still in the name of philosophy, as understood by Seneca. The results of this questioning - potential modifications and their consequences for the Stoic system - will constitute the bulk of the following chapter.

[47] Seneca, *Letters* 89.4-5, **26G** in Long & Sedley 1987.

Chapter Three: Progress Without Knowledge

Let us return to the overarching progression of the discussion so far: first, some of the basic Stoic concepts were laid out, including the definition of knowledge, the source of cosmopolitan obligations, and the distinction between those agents who are making moral progress but are not yet Sages (progressors), and the Sages themselves. It was also noted that this distinction is exhaustive, as everyone is unknowingly pursuing virtue. Second, it was explained that given the Stoic conceptions of knowledge, soul, and body, an agent cannot construct a cognitive impression of the *hegemonikon* of another person. This entails that the agent cannot epistemically ground any prioritization of their direct cosmopolitan efforts. Basically, the agent cannot evaluate a person to check whether that person has reached the point of self-sufficiency, meaning that any direct cosmopolitan effort could be unnecessary - and therefore likely viewed as an unvirtuous action by Marcus Aurelius. But I think this is a problem that is not due to the strict ethical standards of Stoicism, or something that stems from their metaphysics. Rather, I take it that this stems from the strict nature of Stoic epistemology, which limits our ability as agents to make epistemic progress, even if the only valuable point to reach is that of Sagehood. However, there are a couple of preliminary points to be made regarding Stoic justification - in both the epistemic and moral senses.

As discussed in the last chapter, the Stoic epistemic system places the Stoic agent in a difficult situation: attempting to fulfill their cosmopolitan duties while being unable to attain the knowledge they need in order to ensure that their efforts are not unnecessary. However, what we are worried about here is primarily a question of being *morally* justified in direct cosmopolitan efforts. The epistemic aspect of the question comes about due to a more general aspect of Stoic theory: moral justification for a Stoic is largely constituted by epistemic justification (which for

the Stoics is the possession of knowledge). The desires, aversions, opinions, and impulses mentioned in the Dichotomy of Control all begin with the agent constructing a certain impression, and then assenting to it. This process is the basis of all of Stoic epistemology: one has knowledge when one assents to the correct (cognitive) impressions. One important aspect of these impressions is that they are constructed by the agent in response to some basic perceptual stimulus. The agent then places the perception in context with their background beliefs in order to form the impression we receive. Additionally, if we take Epictetus to be describing a virtuous agent in the Dichotomy of Control, then assenting to the correct impressions is also the foundation of being morally virtuous.

This claim is also supported in the Stoic tendency to locate virtue and knowledge in the same part of the soul. Sextus Empiricus tells us that "knowledge is the leading part of a soul in a certain state"[48] but we also have evidence from Diogenes Laertius, who tells us that "Virtue is a disposition of the mind, always consistent and harmonious"[49]. Additionally, it was explained in the previous chapters that virtue is a property of the *hegemonikon*, and that the *hegemonikon* is also often referred to as the 'leading part of the soul'. The soul is home to all psychological faculties for the Stoics, and as such can also be said to correspond to the term 'mind'. Given these two considerations, we know that both knowledge and virtue are both states of the *hegemonikon*. But, this is only one side of the tight connection between Stoic moral justification and Stoic epistemic justification.

To further explicate this relationship, let us return to our most pertinent example of Stoic action: departing on direct cosmopolitan efforts to better a given agent. The issue with these efforts brought up in the previous chapter is the requirement of knowledge for action. This

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[48] Diogenes Laertius, *Live of Eminent Philosophers* 7.1.37, trans. C. D. Yonge 1915.
[49] Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 2.81, **33P** in Long & Sedley 1987

largely stems from the moral requirement given by Marcus: that a virtuous Stoic agent does not knowingly depart on unnecessary actions. However, given that we do not have the appropriate type of epistemic access to our cosmopolitan target, this means that our agent is in fact *morally* unjustified in departing on direct cosmopolitan efforts with a given agent, as they lack the pertinent knowledge required to ensure this action is necessary. This tells us that at least in some cases, Stoic moral justification requires epistemic justification. This requires us to take a closer look at how impressions are constructed - and explain what makes the cognitive impression so special.

Cognitivity Itself

As it stands, our current understanding of the cognitive impression is vague, and has only been dipped into as a means of answering a focused question. Here, the exact nature of the cognitive impression becomes truly relevant, and there are some potentially conflicting claims made about these impressions that need to be resolved. I turn here to the work of Simon Shogry, who in his paper "Creating a Mind for Truth: The Role of Expertise in the Stoic Account of the Kataleptic Impression" lays out an excellent contrast of the predominant contemporary interpretations of what exactly the Stoics meant by this special sort of impression. The issue essentially revolves around whether or not the mark of cognitivity is internal or external to the impression itself. The internalists claim that "the Stoics hold that all and only [cognitive] impressions possess a sensory character that is maximally clear and detailed"[50]. However, this account falls short in that it does not allow for an agent to be mistaken about the cognitivity of a given impression. Shogry also brings up that "On this view, the Stoics must take on the rather strong claim that no non-[cognitive] impression possesses the degree of phenomenological

[50] Shogry pp.1, my brackets. I follow Long and Sedley in translating the term 'kataleptic' as 'cognitive'. This is done with Shogry's quotes as well for consistency.

clarity and detail which characterizes [cognitive] impressions"[51]. This sort of infallibility would be great, but places quite a burden of proof on the internalist.

So, it seems that the externalist has the upper hand at first. The specifics of this view are that "a [cognitive] impression differs from one that is not [cognitive] simply by having the right causal connection with the state of affairs it represents"[52]. This ultimately means that the mark of cognitivity is an element of the causal history of the impression, not some subjective quality that only the recipient of the impression has access to. The externalist avoids the difficulty of external infallibility in the internalist interpretation, but suffers from its own drawback. As Shogry says: "the worry, then, is that, if the externalist is correct, then the [cognitive] impression cannot serve as a useful criterion of truth"[53].

However, this is not exactly a new objection for the project at hand. In Chapter Two, it was shown that we cannot get a cognitive impression of the relevant state of someone's soul. For our purposes (prioritizing our cosmopolitan efforts), the cognitive impression alone is already not a useful criterion of truth. Shogry is worried that the externalist interpretation of the cognitive impression will render it unable to give us several important pieces of knowledge. While we have identified just one case in Chapter Two, we are already skeptical of the power of the cognitive impression. This objection doesn't really serve as a reason against adopting the externalist interpretation here. Furthermore, Shogry's account of expertise serves as a way to escape this difficulty for the externalists. Shogry puts forth substantial textual evidence to support his view of the interactions between impressions and the concepts used to construct them. This language is nothing new to our discussion of impressions, as we have already

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[51] Shogry pp. 2, my brackets.
[52] Shogry pp. 4, my brackets.
[53] Shogry pp.4, my brackets.

discussed how the concepts within an agent's mind place the affective component of the impression within a certain context. For Shogry, however, the different concepts we have access to can genuinely alter the sensory character of the impression we construct[54].

Shogry uses the example of two people listening to a piece of classical music, one who is an expert and one who is an amateur. The amateur "will deploy the concepts 'classical music', 'violins', or maybe even 'intense'"[55]. The deployment of these concepts gives the impression of the amateur a certain, distinct sensory character. The expert's mind treats the musical piece somewhat differently, instead employing concepts "such as 'four note motif', 'modulation', and 'harmony'"[56]. These concepts result in the expert's impression of the music having a distinct sensory character from that of the amateur.

However, this is not to say that the expert is somehow automatically *epistemically* superior to the amateur[57]. It is not the case that one of these impressions is cognitive, and one is not. Rather, the different concepts employed in the construction of these impressions results in a difference in the beliefs that they might form if the impression is assented to. The difference comes about in how the expert and amateur contextualize the raw perceptual input of their impression when they construct it. Our amateur can form a perfectly justified belief that they listened to a rather intense classical violin piece, as their impression of that intense violin piece is cognitive. Similarly, the expert forms a cognitive impression that they listened to the same classical violin piece, instead noting that it had a specific harmony, featuring four note motifs and using a particular sort of modulation. But both of these impressions are equally cognitive, and they both would result in true beliefs about the music if assented to, although those beliefs

[54] Paraphrased from Shogry pp.10
[55] Shogry pp.10
[56] Shogry pp.10
[57] A case for this superiority could be made, but is unneeded for the argument at hand.

would have different content to them. The difference in content stems from the contextualizing of the impressions by the mind, but each of them is still caused by the state of affairs they claim to represent.

However, we still need to address the fallibility concern. By taking the externalist interpretation here, we have to admit cases where the cognitive impression does not result in a true belief. To explain this potential failure of the cognitive impression, let us do some closer examination of those cases where an agent cannot get the knowledge they need. As stated earlier, the way that an agent obtains a piece of knowledge for the Stoics is to assent to a cognitive impression - since cognitive impressions are believed to be those that guarantee truth. But, just assenting to a cognitive impression may not be enough. Sextus Empiricus tells us of certain problematic cases:

> While the older Stoics say that this cognitive impression is the criterion of truth, the later ones added 'and which has no impediment'. For there are times when a cognitive impression occurs, but it is incredible owing to the external circumstances[58].

Sextus mentions a category of cases here, where cognitive impressions seem to be impeded by something external to the impression. Sextus also brings up a well known example that represents an impeded cognitive impression, involving the myth of Admetus and Heracles:

> Thus when Heracles stood before Admetus, having brought Alcestis back from the dead, Admetus took in a cognitive impression of Alcestis, but did not believe it…for he reasoned that Alcestis was dead , and that one who is dead does not rise again though certain spirits do sometimes roam around … Therefore the cognitive impression is not the criterion of truth unconditionally, but when it has no impediment[59].

[58] Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors* 7.253-60, **40K** in Long & Sedley 1987.
[59] Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors* 7.253-60, **40K** in Long & Sedley 1987.

There are a couple of important implications of the description of the case above. In this case, the reason Admetus' impression is insufficient for knowledge is not because the impression he constructs appears as non-cognitive, but rather because some external circumstance prevents it from resulting in knowledge despite its cognitive appearance (here, the fact that Alcestis is dead). It seems that the impression appears cognitive to the agent, but this can result from another fact which was not taken into account by the agent. The 'and which has no impediment' criteria is best viewed as a Stoic accommodation to the possibility of a fallible cognitive impression[60].

My intended modification to Stoicism is to make assent to these impeded cognitive impressions acceptable - which has a number of implications. First, it heavily urges us to adopt a rather externalist interpretation of cognitivity: a cognitive impression is one that simply has the correct causal relation to the state of affairs it represents. The impression is also related causally to the agent due to its nature as an impression. The appeal of the internalist interpretation was the infallibility of cognitive impressions, but this seems to be implausible anyways. Moving forward, the externalist definition of cognitivity will be employed. This means that cognitive impressions, for our purposes, are ones that accurately represent the state of affairs they claim to, and has come about through the right kind of causal process. This process essentially involves being taken in by a normal mind, and examined for impediments. We are taking on the baggage of Shogry's externalist worry, but there is a solution for this worry to be explained later in the chapter. Secondly, it needs to be shown that these impeded cognitive impressions are still worth having - they are somehow better than non-cognitive impressions. And finally, we need to be sure that the Stoic ideal - the Sage - remains an ideal with this modification.

Identifying Impediments

[60] This is explained by Long & Sedley (1987), page 251.

These impediments are elements of the causal history of the impression that can explain its unreliability despite its cognitive appearance. These can range from some story about how we came to access the impression, to other facts about the world that we failed to connect with the impression at hand. These facts often stand in a more logical relationship with the impression, such as unrealized implications of the impression, or antecedents to it that we are not explicitly aware of. Knowing what these impediments are will allow us to closely monitor the limits of our understanding. For example, let us assume that I construct a cognitive sense impression representing the coffee mug on the table in front of me. This impression indicates that there is only one mug on the table, and that it is my usual coffee mug. Given these facts, I assent to the impression, and believe this is my coffee mug on the table. However, I have a smudge on my glasses, thus causing my roommate's coffee mug to look like mine at first glance. The smudge is an impediment to the impression that my coffee mug is on the table. When I see the smudge on my glasses, I then become aware of this element of the impression's causal history, and can withdraw my assent from that proposition, and the beliefs based upon it. Upon cleaning the smudge off, I become aware that this is in fact my roommate's mug, and that my initial impression was mistaken.

In the above coffee mug case, the impression is impeded due to the fact that the visual content of the impression is ambiguous - there are two states of affairs that could have similar visual content. The smudge on my glasses is obstructing my roommate's mug in such a way that it is visually similar to my mug, and this causes me to assent to the impression that it is my mug. Realizing that this impression was not to be assented to can prevent the agent from assenting to

similarly impeded impressions again[61]. Recognizing that the impediment is part of the impression's causal history marks it as not to be assented to, but also improves my epistemic capacity by preventing a possible mistake in other contexts. Moving forward, I know that any visual impression with the smudge as part of its causal history is also impeded, and therefore not to be assented to. Essentially, I have become aware of at least one new way in which I can be mistaken about cognitive impressions, and thus can avoid that mistake in the future. This counts as genuine epistemic progress, and thus a reason that these impeded impressions are still epistemically valuable. Progress here seems easily achievable, but we have only covered the cases in which the impediments are some other state of affairs, and not part of the impression itself.

One key element of an impression's causal history is that it is constructed by my mind. Returning to our definition of cognitive impressions, this means that the mind must be functionally normal in order for the impressions it constructs to be cognitive. This means that if my mind is somehow hindered, then any impression formed by it must be impeded - true or not. An easy example of such a case is someone who is having a dream. Impressions in dreams do often seem real if one is not aware of the dream state, and thus would appear to be cognitive in those cases. But, in each of those cases, the fact that we are dreaming serves as an impediment to the cognitivity of the impressions we are receiving, regardless if we are aware of it or not. Even if I dream that I am flying, I should not believe that I am flying when I wake up, as it was in a dream. This concern about the state of our minds also can help against cases of epistemic luck. If I hallucinate that my door is open, and it actually is, the fact that my door is open does not mean

[61] There is an interesting discussion to be had about how human memory limits the reliability of this process to a certain degree, but for the sake of space it is avoided here. The limits of memory can merely be regarded as another aspect of Nature for the Stoics, and therefore something to be lived in accord with.

this impression is cognitive - because the impression lacks the correct type of causal origin to distinguish whether or not it is a hallucination. The fact that I am hallucinating serves as an impediment for the impression that my door is open - even if my door is actually open. The hallucination explains why the door seems open without requiring that the door actually be open. Realizing I am impeded by my hallucination will result in me realizing that I received this impression by impeded means, and so it should not be assented to, no matter how cognitive it appears. Hallucinating is merely one form of abnormal mental function that can impede impressions.

Thankfully, Shogry offers an interpretation where the Sage can account for periods of abnormal mental function because they "keep track of the distinctive *transitional* impressions which signal the beginning and end of this period"[62]. While these impressions do not immediately mark themselves as transitional, they are impressions that provide some context to the impressions we receive while our mind is abnormal. While we may not always have access to these, "the Sage will recall that [they] earlier suffered an impression (e.g.) that the room is spinning. Because this transitional impression displays a phenomenological defect, it will stand out from the clear and non-[cognitive] impressions that follow it"[63]. In our case, the transitional impression may not be so obvious, or we as imperfect agents may fail to recognize the impression as such. But we can still progress as epistemic agents by gaining more and more awareness of these transitional impressions, which in turn will give us insight into those periods in which our understanding is limited, and thus when we cannot obtain cognitive impressions. The discussion so far has primarily involved how we identify impediments, but the awareness of

[62] Shogry pp. 27
[63] Shogry pp. 27

an impediment is not all that is required for progress. We also need to identify which beliefs that an impediment affects, which can be a bit more tricky.

Impediments and Virtue

Given that we can withhold assent to cognitive impressions when we are aware of their impediments, the Stoic progressor simply needs a means by which to become aware of impeded impressions that the agent is not already aware of. These two in combination would allow a progressor to make genuine epistemic progress in light of impediments. Such a means stems from the particular connection between impressions and those products of reason mentioned in the Dichotomy of Control: desires, aversions, impulses, and opinions. I wish to focus on a latter portion of the passage for the moment, which serves as a sort of promise from Epictetus: "Remember then, if you regard that which is by nature slavish as being free, and that which is not your own as being your own, you'll have cause to lament, you'll have a troubled mind, and you'll find fault with gods and human beings..."[64]. The frustrations that he describes are the result of violating the moral standard he puts forth - namely, the Dichotomy of Control, and failing to assent to only cognitive impressions.

However, there is even more that we can gather from this promise. Remember that only the faculty of reason is free or in our control, and this faculty produces the four relevant categories of states mentioned above. Given this, we know that the relevant things can have incorrect targets are our desires, aversions, impulses, and opinions. These things are all the result of assent to certain impressions. If any of these mental states are frustrated, or ultimately have an incorrect target (e.g., something outside of our control), then we know that the agent possessing those mental states must have based those incorrectly targeted mental states on impressions that

[64] Epictetus, *Enchiridion* 1.3, trans. Robin Hard 2014.

they should *not* have assented to. Given this, those impressions must be either non-cognitive impressions, or cognitive impressions that have an impediment. But for the present, we are only worried about progressors, who we have already stated will still only assent to cognitive impressions. This means that if a progressor experiences one of these frustrations, then there is only one possibility: that agent must have assented to an impression that was cognitive, but possessed an impediment of which they were unaware. Since this agent is a progressor, we know that they would not assent to an impression if it did not appear to be cognitive. If they were aware of the impediment, then the impression would not be assented to. This allows the agent to identify which of their impressions are impeded, but can they retroactively identify which mental states are based on that impression?

Thankfully, each desire and impulse of an agent is based upon a specific act of assent to a given impression or set of impressions. So, each desire and impulse will have a correlated set of impressions. We are aware of which impressions a given state is based on both when we receive those impressions initially and assent to them, but also when we examine the resulting mental state and reflect on it. This allows a progressor to identify the problematic impression in question when a desire or impulse is frustrated. There are two possible sources of that impression: sense perception or rational derivations. With sense impressions, we do not have to look any further back than the particular act of perception in order to identify which impressions are relevant. In rational derivations, each one of the premises will themselves be based on a particular impression, thus allowing us to identify those impressions as well. Regardless of the source, the progressor is able to easily identify the relevant impressions when faced with a frustrated desire, aversion, impulse or judgement.

So what should progressors do when they receive a potentially impeded impression, or identify that one of their past impressions was impeded? There is a decision making process available to any progressor based on the Dichotomy of Control. First, the impression is checked to see if it is cognitive. If not, the agent rejects mental states stemming from it, and we are finished. Otherwise, the impression's causal history must be investigated. If it is a sense impression, the agent must simply perform a 'sensory diagnostic' - merely checking if they are aware of any malfunctions in their senses, or elements of the impression's causal history could interfere with our senses. These factors can range from crowded places making it difficult to hear, or a smudge on one's glasses that blurs a small portion of one's field of vision. If none of these are found, then sense impressions are trusted, and the investigation turns to the mind[65] - both its status and any preconceptions that could be involved. In the case where an impediment is found, we identify if that impediment is within our power to attempt to correct. In the case of the smudge on my glasses, it is up to me to attempt to correct the impediment, and upon successfully doing so, I can trust my vision in that area once more. In the case where the impediment is not up to me, it takes the class of an indifferent external circumstance, and the agent must withhold assent to impressions that are impeded by it. In either case, the agent is able to either achieve truth and therefore knowledge, or avoid assenting to false impressions that could impede others later down the line. But, this only saves us from impeded *sense* impressions.

In the case where an agent receives an impression through a rational derivation,the elements of the causal history are not so easy to identify. For each premise within the derivation, the agent will have gained their knowledge of that premise from assenting to some impression.

[65] It is worth noting here that there is another possibility, namely one when the agent has evidence that they are a poor detector of impediments. In these cases, the virtuous response is to simply learn how to identify impediments better. The best path for learning this skill is simply to continually evaluate more impressions and their resulting mental states.

Instead of investigating our senses, we instead investigate the impressions that we assented to in order to form our judgements about those premises. This essentially returns us to the first fork in the road, investigating those impressions based on their source as well. A regress looms here slightly, but there is a bottom to this investigation in the accepted rational preconceptions that the Stoics hold. Among these rational preconceptions are arguments whose truth is to be accepted as fact, and referring to these arguments can allow us to shorten the investigation of many impressions greatly. For example, we can trust sense perceptions (at some basic level) due to one of these classic Stoic arguments. Since the truth of this argument is a rational preconception, we do not need to investigate it further in order to end our inquiry. This is how progressors can effectively handle impediments, and even identify them long after the impeded impression has been assented to. This allows virtuous agents to consistently improve their conception of the limits of their rational understanding, and prevents those agents from assenting to impressions outside of these bounds. But, we still need to explicate how one can use expertise to obtain more cognitive impressions *within* the limits of understanding.

Maintaining the Sage

This gives us the tension mentioned earlier: the Stoic Sage in our modified system may behave inconsistently with how the Sage is described in the source material. If we do not accurately represent the Stoic ideal, then the modification drifts way too far from Stoicism. Stobaeus gives us a clear guide on what Sage or 'wise man' looks like : "They [the Stoics] say that the wise man never makes a false supposition, and that he does not assent at all to anything

incognitive, owing to his not opining and being ignorant of nothing"[66]. We know that anything attributed to the wise man or a virtuous agent is going to be true of the Stoic Sage, as the Sage is defined as the perfectly virtuous agent. So, the Stoic Sage does not assent to non-cognitive impressions, and also never makes a false supposition. Furthermore, we must keep in mind that the Stoic Sage does not behave like a perfect Bayesian agent - making proper conditionalizations based on probability. They exclusively possess knowledge, meaning assent to true cognitive impressions, and exclusively act on those pieces of knowledge. Essentially, they only act on truth. If our modification allows assent to impeded cognitive impressions, then the Stoic Sage may require more than just assent to cognitive impressions to be in the knowledge state, thus contradicting the source material.

Thankfully, this concern does not fly under Shogry's radar in his account of expertise. He considers the case of an amateur observer encountering a peacock for the first time: "without the specialized concept 'peacock', the amateur perceiver could not form an impression that 'there is a peacock': *a fortiori*, he cannot form a [cognitive] impression with this content"[67]. This is essentially what we described in the music example. However, here there is an important difference. Though our amateur cannot construct a cognitive impression of a peacock, "he is not prevented from forming a [cognitive] impression of the peacock *qua* colorful bird".[68] This is what allows the Sage to be a regular person - that is, the Sage is not required to be an ideal expert in every single domain in order to serve as an ideal epistemic agent. But, there are two sides to this issue: "... in either rejecting a [cognitive] impression, or accepting one that is not [cognitive], the subject goes wrong in her acts of assent…"[69]. Just as the Sage needs to stay vigilant for any

[66] Stobaeus, *Anthology* 2.111,18 - 112,8, **40G** in Long & Sedley 1987.
[67] Shogry pp. 15, my brackets.
[68] Shogry pp. 15, my brackets.
[69] Shogry pp. 17, my brackets.

non-cognitive impressions, they also need to obtain those cognitive impressions which they ought to assent to. Essentially, if the Sage has enough evidence to assent to an impression, then they ought to assent. Shogry addresses several classic arguments posed against the Stoics, and discusses how the Sage might handle them.

First comes the cases where two objects are highly similar, so much so that these two objects are nearly indiscernible. The skeptics put forth a case where an egg is placed before a subject, and then the egg is swapped out with an indiscernible egg without the subject knowing. It seems that our subject's initial impression is cognitive, but if their impression is of the first egg, then it must be false[70]. Here, Shogry claims that we can deny the cognitive status of those impressions, because the subject "lacks the relevant expertise in identifying eggs"[71]. This leads to the more general claim that "in order to form a [cognitive] impression of a highly similar object, the perceiver must have a mind capable of distinguishing this object from one which is genuinely different..."[72]. The Sage would recognize in this scenario that they are no expert on eggs, and thus would withhold assent to the impression at hand.

Another example considered by Shogry is that of the "Veiled Argument", a classic skeptical objection to the Stoics. We are asked to imagine a ball of snakes is within a hole. We cannot see the ball, only the heads of the snakes. In this case, we are unable to distinguish between the head of the first snake to pop out and the second snake's head that pops out. However, the Sage is not required to make bold, specific claims about the nature of what lies in this hole: "To deploy a layman's concept of 'hole' or 'animal is all that is required to form the [cognitive] impression that 'there is a hole with at least one animal coming out of it', to which

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[70] Paraphrased from Shogry pp. 18
[71] Shogry pp. 20.
[72] Shogry pp. 20, my brackets.

the non-herpetologist Sage could safely assent”[73]. Here the Sage essentially lowers the bar of what impression they are looking for in order to account for their lack of expertise. But, this discussion also nets Shogry a rather convenient prescriptive formula for non-Sages aiming to approximate epistemic virtue: “(1) acquire expertise in a given domain, to enable the formation of a greater number of [cognitive] impressions in those circumstances; (2) continually monitor the limits of one’s understanding, to grasp the kinds of objects and features regarding which a [cognitive] impression is out of reach”[74]. The first step of this method has been explained already - it is identifying impediments, and understanding the limits of our expertise as the Sage does. Acquiring new expert concepts looks different for each domain, but there is one of particular relevance that I wish to begin with. Here we can finally explain how this modification - accepting assent to impeded cognitive impressions - can solve the problem of paralysis in moral prioritization.

Cosmopolitan Expert Concepts

As mentioned earlier, expert concepts are specific to the domain of their relevance. The concept of 'four note motif’ is not going to enhance our capacity to obtain cognitive impressions in general, but only in the domain of music. As a general epistemic claim, expert concepts by themselves do little work. However, our core project is specific to a given domain: the domain of cosmopolitanism and prioritization of our efforts. Expertise in this area could potentially allow us to close the epistemic gap that we face during cosmopolitan evaluations. The total mixture relation in which we find the soul and body in Stoic metaphysics prevents us from obtaining a simple, cognitive sensory impression of our target’s soul, so we need to use our expert concepts to close the gap. But what could those expert concepts be?

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[73] Shogry pp. 23, my brackets.
[74] Shogry pp. 24, my brackets.

One of our core concerns in this problem of moral evaluation is that without a direct perception of the soul to provide context, we cannot be sure whether virtuous behavior is indeed caused by a virtuous soul. But, one area in which we could acquire expertise is these counterfeits of virtue - what other motivations there could be for performing what appears to be virtuous behavior, but is in fact a sort of counterfeit. One could conceive of scenarios in which acting as a virtuous Stoic is directly beneficial to a particularly practical person. Behaving for a short time as a virtuous Stoic could ironically beget someone more wealth, and that wealth could serve as their motivation for the behavior. With this in mind, we can identify certain possible cases where a person may be producing a counterfeit of virtuous behavior (say, donating to a charity), but in reality it is only to improve the image of their business, and thus acquire more wealth. The ideal cosmopolitan agent would be on the lookout for these types of counterfeits. This would involve a withholding of judgements regarding the virtue of an action that may be a counterfeit until evidence of its virtue is obtained, or the possibility of its counterfeit status is eliminated.

Another related issue we face in this project of cosmopolitan evaluation is the possibility of deception. As it is with the counterfeit worry, positively identifying these cases of deception will prevent us from assenting to impressions about which we were deceived. But unlike counterfeits of virtue, expertise in deception is not so specific to a Stoic or even a philosopher in general. In fact, this sort of expertise is likely accrued by most people at some point in their lives. When I was first making friends as a young child, learning of someone’s deception was grounds for their rejection as a potential friend. While I was likely a peculiar child in some respects, I have seen this behavior replicated many times by both younger siblings and others. Collecting this sort of expertise seems to be a rather intuitive part of life for many people.

And this expertise is particularly important in overcoming the metaphysical worry about cosmopolitan evaluations. As a refresher, our sense impressions of a person's soul will always be somewhat muddled with elements of the body, as the two are in a relationship of total mixture. This means that the two cannot be separated even in the epistemic sense through impressions. But, in the case where we are attempting to evaluate a particular target, that target will have access to their own *hegemonikon*, which will prevent the metaphysical worry from complicating their internal perception. All that the evaluator must do is ask for self-reports of the target's motivations for a particular behavior, and if given honestly and with sufficient detail, these reports can overcome the metaphysical worry. One concern is that the target could be deceiving the evaluator with their self-reports, which is why expertise in deception is necessary to truly overcome this issue.

If we can safely rule out the possibility of deception using our expertise in the target's self-reports, then the only way the target can be mistaken is if they themselves have failed on the epistemic side of things. Since their self-reports on their motivations can be trusted, so too can their self-reports of the impressions they receive. With some access to the impressions received by the target, the evaluator can use expertise in identifying impediments and their general knowledge of the limits of understanding to evaluate which of the target's impressions are impeded, which not only confirms that our efforts are not wasted on the target, but also immediately begins the process of assisting them in acquiring epistemic virtue. If the target is not mistaken about their virtuous status, then we are able to essentially bridge the gap between our internal access, and the evaluator can gain access to a testimonial based cognitive impression of the target's soul, which is not impeded from the nature of total mixture due to the target's internal access.

Ultimately, the relevant expert concepts allow us to identify cases of non-virtuous mental states. In cosmopolitan evaluation, these all relate back to our nature as rational beings: we need to understand deception, human motivation, and what circumstances lead a person to virtue. Expertise in these can help us avoid those unnecessary actions noted by Marcus Aurelius - as we can combine these elements to positively identify cases of self-sufficiency through a three step process. First, the evaluator must check if the target is being deceptive. If the target is not deceptive, the second step can be carried out. This involves evaluating the target's mental states, beginning with their motivations to see if they violate the Dichotomy of Control. Here, the evaluator bolsters their inquiry with expertise in deception, motivations, and the circumstances that lead to virtue. Finally, given that the target is not lying about their mental states being in line with the Dichotomy of Control, we can evaluate the impressions those states are based on through the target's reports to ensure that the target has not made a mistake in their assent, either through an impediment or a non-cognitive impression. If all these tests pass, then the target is assumed to be at the point of self sufficiency.

Let us assume that Garvey, our small town school teacher from the second chapter, were to encounter Brad, who is a Silicon Valley executive. Garvey has some sense of cosmopolitanism and a love of teaching, and will serve as our evaluator in this case. Garvey also is in a clear state of mind, so he is able to look only externally for impediments to his impressions. Watching out for impediments is a constant in Garvey's life, so we can assume he has at least some of the expert concepts required. Brad is also equipped with some knowledge of Stoicism, and understands at some level both the internal and outward-looking aspects of Stoic virtue. As such, it is a distinct possibility that Brad has reached the point of self-sufficiency, ensuring that Garvey is forced to investigate more deeply. Brad and Garvey discuss some Stoic

ideas and their favorite passages and such, until they reach the point of discussing how they apply the concepts to their lives. Garvey has sufficient expertise in deception to be able to detect if Brad is being deceptive, at least about his own mental states.. Assuming Garvey makes that evaluation in the discussion, he reaches a point of decision. If Brad is deceiving him, we know that he is departing at least in some sense from epistemic virtue, in knowingly speaking falsehoods to someone who is clearly of a positive disposition towards him. This would mean that Garvey can end his inquiry, and knows that Brad is not at the point where his efforts would be wasted. If Brad is not being deceptive, then Garvey can move forward to the next decision point.

In this context, it seems suitable to inquire what Brad's motivations for adopting Stoicism into his life are. If Brad answers along lines that do not violate the Dichotomy of Control, then the inquiry continues, otherwise Brad is a suitable target. Each decision point in the process looks roughly this way, where Garvey attempts to construct a new impression of Brad's motivations through his self-reports. In each case, if the motivation violates the Dichotomy of Control, then the inquiry process ends and Garvey's cosmopolitan efforts begin. Garvey also inquires into how Brad has constructed his impressions - though not in those exact words - in order to identify any case where Brad has assented to an impeded or non-cognitive impression. In those cases, Garvey sees that Brad has not reached the point of self sufficiency in epistemic terms as well. Important to note here is that the realm of possible inquiry is limited by Garvey's body of expertise. As Garvey is a progressor, we cannot assume him to have a Sage-like body of expertise. As such, it is up to Garvey to limit his inquiry by his current expertise, as going beyond his expertise would go beyond what is in his control, and thus violate the Dichotomy. Once Garvey's body of expertise limits his inquiry, the possibility of deception is excluded, and

Garvey has assented to no impeded or non-cognitive impressions, Garvey is justified in believing that Brad has reached the point of self sufficiency, and would not benefit from Garvey's direct cosmopolitan efforts.. Thus, Garvey can take his efforts elsewhere, and avoid the unnecessary action, thus contributing to his virtue.

Conclusion

For now, let us take a sort of final tally of the implications of my proposed modification to Stoic theory. First, we allow virtuous agents to base their actions upon assent to cognitive impressions, without a strict requirement of no impediment, and a softer requirement of not being aware of any impediment after an initial check. Second, if an agent's desires or impulses are frustrated, then it is the agent's responsibility to locate the responsible impression, and investigate what impediment was present - as this impression would have not have been assented to if it was not cognitive. This means that those at the point of self-sufficiency remain genuinely better off epistemically than non-virtuous agents, while not requiring them to be Sages. Furthermore, the Sage's behavior remains unchanged, as they will continue to only base their actions on knowledge, meaning that we do not transform our moral ideal into something no longer Stoic.

Most importantly, virtuous agents are able to circumvent the problem of moral evaluation in cases of direct cosmopolitan efforts through expertise and an understanding of impediments. A virtuous, expert cosmopolitan agent may construct an impression of their target that is far more robust that an amateur cosmopolitan agent. Using their expertise, the agent can eliminate many alternative explanations for their target's potentially virtuous behavior, and thus draw nearer and nearer to certainty that the agent themselves is or is not self-sufficient. Furthermore, this expertise helps avoid the worst consequence of messing up this prioritization. These expert

concepts help us to positively identify those agents that DO need our help in achieving virtue earlier in the process, and agents to have reached the point of self sufficiency are identified by the end. Also, there is a clear path forward for any cosmopolitan evaluator: they need to obtain more expertise in deception, human motivation, and the circumstances that lead to virtue.

Now, it is worth mentioning that this system does not easily account for progressors to cross the line into Sagehood, as each time our efforts fail, it may constitute an unnecessary action and result in a violation of virtue. But there is an easy response to this: the failed effort was necessary for the agent to become aware of an impediment or improve their expertise, and thus is a necessary action for moral progress. Furthermore, the problem of reaching the ideal is not a problem unique to Stoicism. For progressors, this modification allows them to escape the paralysis caused by strict epistemic requirements in cases where cosmopolitan efforts were held back on epistemic grounds. This modification, therefore, furthers the goal of Stoic philosophy - by helping progressors achieve wisdom and virtue, and therefore achieve the highest good.

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