FATE AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY IN STOICISM

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Thesis Abstract

Gökçe Yırcalı, "Fate and Moral Responsibility in Stoicism"

The Stoics have an intricate account of fate which is interconnected with many branches of their thought, their ontology, logic, physics, theology and ethics. It is the Stoic claim that agents could be held to be morally responsible in a deterministic world. This thesis aims to show that the arguments put forward by Chrysippus concerning the compatibility of fate and moral responsibility are not completely successful; on the other hand, it is through the Stoic conception of reason that fate and moral responsibility could be made compatible in Stoicism. Accordingly, in the first part the concept of fate is explained, in the second part the Chrysippean arguments are analyzed, and in the final part the functions of reason are laid out.

Tez Özeti

Gökçe Yırcalı, "Stoacılıkta Yazgı ve Ahlaki Sorumluluk"

Stoacılar, düşüncelerinin varlıkbilim, mantık, fizik, dinbilim ve ahlak gibi çeşitli dallarıyla iç içe geçen kompleks bir yazgı tanımına sahiptirler.Belirlenimci bir evrende dahi kişilerin ahlaki sorumluluğa sahip olduklarını savunurlar. Bu tez Stoacı Chrysippus'un yazgı ve ahlaki sorumluluğu bağdaştırmak için ortaya koyduğu argümanların yetersiz olduğunu, fakat yazgı ve ahlaki sorumluluğun Stoacı us tanımı sayesinde uyumlu hale geleceğini göstermeyi hedeflemektedir. İlk kısımda yazgı kavramı açıklanmış, ikinci kısımda Chrysippus'un argümanları analiz edilmiş, son kısımda ise usun işlevleri ortaya konmuştur.

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And mom, if it were not for you.....

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

One might be inspired to learn about the Stoic conception of fate by reading Seneca. In his *On Providence*, he relates the lives of historical figures who display the famous "Stoical attitude" by suffering tortures and misfortunes with a "freedom" which comes from knowing that what happens is what is providential and fated to happen, therefore what is good to happen, and cannot change, therefore one should concentrate only on what he can control, his inner self.

One may smile when one hears the story about Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, and his slave. When the slave was about to be whipped, because he had stolen something from the household, he says "but I was fated to steal!" and receives the answer from Zeno "and to be whipped, too!"

However, the actual dispute on fate, its implications, its leading to hard determinism and its relation to moral responsibility was much more serious in the Hellenistic period. The most rigorous arguments were put forward by Chrysippus, the third head of the school, who had to defend the tenets of Stoicism especially against the attacks of the other two major Hellenistic movements, Epicureanism and Academic Scepticism. What is most unfortunate is that none of his writings has survived in its original form. Thus, we find excerpts which mention his teachings and the general views of the Old Stoa only in the writings of others: Cicero the Academic, Plutarch the Platonic, Alexander of Aphrodisias the Peripatetic, Diogenes Laertius, a compiler of lives...and of course, Epicurus. As one might guess, many of these people were biased against Stoic views.

In this work, first I will attempt to relate what the Stoics meant by their use of the word, "fate" and explain its characteristics with relevant passages from the surviving excerpts about the Stoic teaching. Then, I will move on to the three major kinds of arguments which were directed against the Stoic notion of fate and which were all answered by Chrysippus. As the analysis proceeds, I will show that however successful Chrysippus' counter-arguments were to answer the particular attacks which were made against the Stoic "fate" (being one of the great logicians of ancient Greek philosophy, he knew how to answer), they were inadequate to rescue the individuals out of the causal web and to assign to them a genuine sense of responsibility. Finally, I will argue that this real sense of responsibility comes with the particular functions of reason bestowed on human beings although they still remain within the boundaries of fate.

CHAPTER 2

WHAT IS STOIC DETERMINISM?

Fate

The Stoics believed that the operation of the universe has an order and is intelligible. This order is such that it involves an everlasting connection of causes by which everything is bound together and this interviewing of causes and events, they termed "fate". Nothing happens causelessly in the world, because nothing is independent of all the things that happened before. What this implies is that if all of the preceding causes were known, future events could be predicted. Cicero states that "since all things happen by fate... if there were some human being who could see with his mind the connection of all causes, he would certainly never be deceived. For whoever grasps the causes of future things must necessarily grasp all that will be." Cicero, *On Divination* 1.127 (Long and Sedley, 1987, p. 338).

Every event that occurs in the cosmos was fated to occur and determined to occur:

> "Chrysippus says, in his *On Fate* that everything happens by fate... Fate is a continuous string of causes of things which exist, or a rational principle according to which the cosmos is managed. Moreover, they say that all of prophecy is real, if providence too exists." Diogenes Laertius 7.149 (Inwood and Gerson, 1997, pp. 136-7)

> Chrysippus calls the substance of fate a power of breath, carrying out the orderly government of the all. That is in *On the world* book 2. But in *On Seasons* book 2, in *On fate*, and here and there in other works he expresses a variety of views: 'Fate is the rationale of the world', or 'the rationale in

> accordance with which past events have happened, present events are happening, and future events will happen Stobaeus 1.79, 1-10 (Long and Sedley, 1987, p. 337)

When events and objects are controlled by fate, which the Stoics tell us is also the same thing as Zeus, Providence, and Necessity, they are not influenced from a distance as puppets are. Instead, fate goes to work in every portion of every object's being. Each object is a combination of inert matter and *pneuma* (which is also corporeal). Pneuma, the soul of the universe, is also called "creative fire", "breath", "spirit" and "fate":

> The Stoics made god out to be an intelligent, a designing power which methodically proceeds towards creation of the world, and encompasses all the seminal principles according to which everything comes about according to fate, and a breath pervading the whole world, which takes on different names owing to the alterations of the matter through which it passes. Aetius 1.7.33 (Long and Sedley, 1987, pp. 274-5)

Whenever an object causes something, its causal power is the same thing as fate. The cause of each thing is divine, for Zeus is in all things. There is a huge plan controlling all events in the past, present and future, and this is fate, Zeus, the Cause. Effects follow causes and become causes, because this is the principle of order and reason by which god/universal nature realizes its plan. This ordered system reflects the fact that all events are connected to divine purpose.

> The Stoics say that since the world is a unity which includes all existing things in itself and is governed by a living, rational, intelligent nature, the government of existing things which it possesses is an everlasting one proceeding in a sequence and ordering. Alexander, *On Fate* 191.30 (Long and Sedley, 1987, p. 337).

These views on fate left the Stoics open to a variety of attacks:

1) If what people do is fated, we cannot praise or blame them for their actions.

2) If what will happen is already fixed, there is no point for us in deliberation, choice and personal effort to bring something about. So, Stoics somehow had to deny that the causality involved in their conception of fate "compels" agents in a way that makes action and moral responsibility completely meaningless.

Causation

Cause (aition) literally means the "thing responsible". For the Stoics, a cause is a thing which, by its activity, brings about an effect.

A cause is a body, for only bodies can act or be acted upon. The knife, by acting upon another body, the flesh, generates an effect, being cut. This effect is not a body, but an incorporeal predicate or "sayable". Otherwise it would be that uncut flesh ceases to exist and is replaced by a new body, cut flesh – the object would not persist through the change. So, the effect should not be a new body, but the incorporeal predicate "is cut" which is true of the persisting flesh.

A causal relation takes place within any single body between its active and passive aspects (god/ breath and matter). The breath in any body is what shapes and characterizes it (as tenor/ *hexis* breath makes it a unified object; as nature/ *phusis* an organism; as soul/ *psuche* an animate organism). Soul itself embodies separate qualities, such as prudence, which are themselves portions of breath. In these various guises, breath is the dominant active cause both of things' existence and their behaviour.

It could be claimed that what Zeno and Cleanthes understood by "fate" was closer to what we call "destiny" according to which it is believed that certain events in people's lives and important historical events are predetermined. These things will happen whether or not we try to prevent them. They do not threaten our independence, on the contrary, they provide proper context for autonomous moral choice, for outcomes may be determined but not the routes to them. The view that "fate consists of certain predetermined events which are not preventable" is sometimes also supported by Chrysippus, when he takes it for granted that Socrates

will die "on a particular day", and he repeats Zeno's simile of a man as a dog tied to a cart who must follow the dictates of fate whether willingly or unwillingly. However, Chrysippus also defends a stronger view that leads to determinism: At the beginning of each world cycle, a causal nexus is providentially planned in virtue of which every detail of the entire world process is predetermined.

> At certain fated times the entire world is subject to conflagration, and then is reconstituted afresh. But the primary fire is as it were a sperm which possesses the principles [logoi] of all things and the causes of past, present, and future events. The nexus and succession of these is fate, knowledge, truth, an inevitable and inescapable law of what exists. In this way everything in the world is excellently organized as in a perfectly ordered society" Aristocles in Eusebius, *Evangelical Preparation* 15.14.2 (Long and Sedley, 1987, p. 276)

> The Stoics say that when the planets return to the same celestial sign...they cause conflagration and destruction of existing things. Once again the world returns anew to the same condition as before...each thing which occurred in the previous period will come to pass indiscernibly [from its previous occurrence]. For again there will be Socrates and Plato and each one of mankind with the same friends and fellow citizens; they will suffer the same things and they will encounter the same things. Nemesius 309.5- 311 (Long and Sedley, 1987, p. 309)

This will mean that alternative actions are not genuinely open to us and let alone the outcomes of our actions, our lives throughout are determined by causal chains which do not operate through our actions at all. When, by contrast, actions are determined through our agency, they are said to be co-fated with other actions; but, in either case, all our actions are themselves as predetermined as the outcomes. (Long and Sedley, 1997)

Chrysippus suggested that fate should be seen not as the entire causal nexus but merely as a set of triggering/preliminary/antecedent causes. That is how fate would not compel our actions. But this conflicts with other reports which strongly suggest fate is the entire conjunction of causes:

> Anyone who says that Chrysippus did not make fate the complete cause of these things [right and wrong actions], but only their preliminary cause, will reveal him once again as in conflict with himself...he ends up saying that no state or process is to the slightest degree other than in accordance with the rationale of Zeus, which he says is identical to fate. Plutarch, *On Stoic Self-Contradictions* 1056B-C (Long and Sedley, 1987, p. 339)

Arguments for the existence of fate are three in kind (Long and Sedley, 1987):

a) Metaphysical: Any gap in the causal nexus (something occurring without a cause, or the failure of an identical conjunction of causes to produce an identical effect each time) would break a fundamental law, similar to the Principle of Sufficient Reason.

b) Empirical: The world's organic unity and alleged success of divination confirm the existence of fate.

c) Logical: Causal predetermination of all future events follows from the principle of bivalence.

The Same Effects Should Follow the Same Causes: Everlasting Recurrence

According to the theory of everlasting recurrence, at certain intervals, the whole universe is dissolved into its most basic element (fire) to be reconstituted exactly as how it was before; because God, having created a perfect world, has no reason to create a better or worse system. What this theory entails is that, because everything will be duplicated, it is not possible for an individual in one world cycle in a certain situation, to act differently in the same situation in another world cycle.

Alexander of Aphrodisias calls attention to a "same causes-same effects" theory implied in this doctrine:

> ...it is impossible where all the same circumstances obtain with respect to the cause and that to which it is a cause, that a result which does not issue on one occasion should ensue on another. For if this happened there would be an uncaused motion. Alexander, *On Fate* 192,28 (Long and Sedley, 1987, p. 338).

This account includes the human impulse, too, which will be the same in two situations where both the external causes and the internal nature of the subject are identical.

The phenomenon involved here is the cyclical nature of events: History repeats itself identically over infinite time. Given the same external situation and the identical human character, the very same action should follow in each cycle. This view denies the possibility that a person can act differently at exactly the same point in the next cycle, since from an eternal perspective that is the same time as now. Because of this implication, Long claims that it is as if the Stoics have a double presentation of reality: There is an eternal perspective and a human viewpoint. Terms

as "possible" and "non-necessary" are irrelevant from God's viewpoint who is outside time. For God, only what will take place is possible; but man lacks such knowledge of the future, that is why he recognizes as possible anything he has no reason for knowing to be impossible, for "possible" means, for the Stoics, what admits of being true if externals do not prevent it from being true. So, before a particular event takes place in this cycle, the Stoics would allow that alternative events are possible until the event does take place (from the human viewpoint); however, the agent involved in the event would have the power to act *only* by the decision which was determined according to his present character and the external situation. (Long, 1996)

For any causal relation where a set of causal conditions bring about a certain effect, the causal relation is necessary in virtue of the impossibility of a situation where the set of causal conditions obtains, but the particular effect does not. The effect will be brought about in every possible situation where the set of causal conditions obtains again. This regularity based account of causality is a consequence of the doctrine of everlasting recurrence. According to it, by the will of Zeus, the world is periodically destroyed by what is called "conflagration", a new world arises which is indiscernible from the previous one. Zeus guides the whole process, actively present in every single stage of the world's recreation. The indiscernibility implies that the world of the present cycle is the same as the world of any other cycle.

> The gods who are not subject to destruction, from their knowledge of this single period, know from it everything that is going to be in the next periods. Nemesius 311 (Long and Sedley, 1987, p. 309).

So, god's determination of the present cycle depends on his knowledge of earlier cycles rather than calculation. He ensures that the complete chain of events that took

place in earlier cycles obtains again by setting up the initial sufficient conditions. The complete sequence of events of any one cycle is predetermined initially, through the "seminal reason" (spermatikos logos) of each thing – the formula in the seed of each thing according to which the emergent offspring takes its shape and which determines what it will be and how it will behave during its life.

The major deterministic implication of the doctrine of everlasting recurrence is that it is impossible in the next world-cycle that the set of causal conditions operative in bringing about a certain event in this world obtains again, and a different event follows. The two worlds being completely indiscernible, the very same result has to obtain.

In this theory, however, the *explanation* of an event differs from the explanation of its *necessity*. To explain the coming about of the particular event, the set of causal conditions is actually sufficient. But the doctrine plays a direct role in establishing the necessity of the event. The reason why a particular event had to obtain following a particular set of causes is that it had obtained in the previous cycles as well, and there can be no variation between cycles. The very same causes will be repeated in the next cycle, and they will necessarily lead to the same effects. (Salles, 2005).

Before I pass on to the next section where I will explain three different kinds of criticism posed against Stoic determination of events, I would like to summerize the basic characteristics of fate:

1) Fate is a rational organization of events: It is the reason of the world and the order which administers everything.

2) Fate is eternal: What occurs was *always* organized and fixed to occur.

3) Fate is inevitable: Nothing external to it could interfere with what occurs, because there is nothing external to it. Fate is in all existing things: As *pneuma*, it connects them through time by antecedent causes and through space by sustaining causes. (Bobzien, 1998)

CHAPTER 3

CRITICISM POSED AGAINST THE STOIC CONCEPTION OF FATE

The Lazy Argument

This argument is found in Cicero's *On Fate* 28-30 (Long and Sedley, 1987) and is put forward by Chrysippus against the attack that if every single event in the universe is determined, there would be no motivation for someone to take any personal action at all, for one would be led to one's fatal end whatever he does or does not (*Argos Logos*: The Lazy Argument).

Chrysippus, in turn, argues that events can be distinguished as simple and complex. An event as Socrates' death on a certain day is simple, but a case like "Oedipus will be born to Laius" is complex and co-fated, because it cannot be thought of without Laius' having intercourse with a woman. "Milo will wrestle at the Olympic Games" is also a complex event, for the act of wrestling involves the necessary existence of an opponent. Similarly, "one can recover whether she calls the doctor or not" is fallacious, because recovery and calling the doctor are co-fated events.

Fatalism (that propositions about future occurents are already true or false; and future is already fixed) was criticised by Aristotle for encouraging idleness. Aristotle rejects the prior truth of a proposition on the grounds that it implies prior necessitation (that future is already fixed and necessary).

> Aristotle Int.9 (18b26-33): "if for every affirmation and negation it is necessary that one of the opposites be true and the other false (already) then there would be no need to deliberate or take trouble thinking that if we do this, this will happen, but if we do not, it will not.

In the Hellenistic period, this objection became known as the "Lazy Argument".

Chrysippus designed the theory of co-fated events to address this problem: a predetermined future event F is co-fated with a present event P if and only if what is predetermined to happen is not just F, but also the complex event FP consisting in F obtaining because P does. (If I am fated to recover, it is also fated that I will recover because I call the doctor)

Why should there be co-fated events? Because some future events conceptually presuppose a causal link between these events and present ones.

> ...[Chrysippus] says in book 2 that it is obvious that many things originate from us, but that these two are none the less co-fated along with the government of the world. And he uses certain examples, like the following. That the cloak should not perish, he says, was fated not absolutely but together with its being looked after. Someone's escaping from the enemy was fated together with his running away from the enemy. And having children was fated together with wanting to have intercourse with a woman. For just as, he says, if someone said that Hegesarchus the boxer would come out of the fight without sustaining a single punch, it would be ridiculous to expect Hegesarchus to fight with his hands by his sides on the ground that he was fated to come out without sustaining a punch, since the person making the denial said it because of the man's superior guard against being punched. Diogenianus in Eusebius, *Evangelical Preparation* 6.8.26-8 (Long and Sedley, 1987, p. 389)

Thus, one cannot assert "Hegesarchus will come off without taking a punch" without meaning he will do so because of his superior guard, so, Hegesarchus' coming off without taking a punch is co-fated with his not fighting with his hands by his side, that is, having his guard up.

Salles argues that co-fated events should be analysed according to the concepts they involve. The assertion "Hegesarchus will come off without taking a

punch" is co-fated because "Hegesarchus will come off without taking a punch because he has his guard up" would be contained in the meaning of the proposition. So the reason why the two events are co-fated is conceptual. According to rules of boxing in antiquity, no one could come off without taking a single punch without using his guard. A fight where one did so would not be a boxing fight at all. The causal connection between the two events is conceptually necessary. This sort of conceptual analysis is central to Chrysippus' theory of co-fated events. To determine which future events are co-fated with present ones, the connection between the concepts used to describe the future events at stake should be exploited.

How about simple events? Simple events, too, depend on the fact that certain earlier events have occurred. "I will die some day", and my dying some day is caused by the present condition of my not being immortal. (Salles, 2005, pp. 13-15). (It should be noted here that Salles does not agree "Socrates will die *on a particular day*" could be a simple event; however, it *is* the original version of the argument).

The difference is that in contrast with the co-fated events, simple events do not have their actual causes in any of the actions of the person. Whatever one does, one will eventually die. In contrast, when, where and how one dies are co-fated events.

Rist, on the other hand, analyses the propositions containing co-fated events in terms of their intelligibility. Accordingly, the Lazy Argument was answered by Chrysippus with a division between simple and complex propositions. "Socrates will die on that particular day" may be true or false, but it is intelligible, and it is certainly the case that he will die at that time. "Laius will have a son Oedipus, whether he has intercourse with a woman or not" is unintelligible, because it is impossible to separate having a son and having intercourse with a woman. (Rist, 1969). The two

events are co-fated. "Milo will wrestle at Olympia if he has an opponent" makes sense; "Milo will wrestle at Olympia whether or not he has an opponent" does not. Therefore, if complex propositions are to be intelligible, different parts of the propositions must describe compatible situations.

Going back to the criticism that fatalism encourages idleness, because we can only act thinking "if we do this, this will happen, if we do not it will not"; Chrysippus' theory may be said to answer it: If an action is co-fated with another, and if my realizing an action necessarily requires another action on my part in that the former could not happen without the latter, the Aristotelian objection that fatalism makes our actions meaningless would not hold against Stoic fatalism which denies that all future events are underdetermined by our actions. Stoic causal fatalism is different from crude (non-causal) fatalism. According to crude fatalism, future events would occur not because certain events are currently occurring, and this version of fatalism does encourage idleness. That is why Hankinson says that the Lazy Argument confounds determinism with Islamic fatalism – no matter what you do a particular fate is in store for you. Causal fatalism, on the other hand, holds that future is already fixed, but it still presupposes what is occurring in the present. Future and present are co-fated: the future will come about because it is occurring now.

The theory attacked by Aristotle (prior truth implies prior necessitation) is crude fatalism, because it does not employ the notion that future events presuppose specific present events. Predetermination can be inferred from prior truth only if prior truth implies necessitating causation.

However, one could argue that although a future event presupposes present events and actions, and these presupposed actions would be *deliberately* done by the agent; the theory of co-fated events cannot overcome the power of a complete causal

nexus. Rist recognizes this implication. If the patient is going to survive, he is going to survive, and if he is going to call a doctor, he is going to call a doctor. No one can dispute that what will in fact take place will take place. (Rist, 1969).

It is true that fated events will not occur no matter what we do, for nothing about fate interrupts the normal pattern of causal relations between events. Chrysippus says if one is fated to recover he is also fated to call the doctor. *However*, if he is fated to call the doctor, then he is fated to do it whether he walks to the phone now, or not. Perhaps he will call him later, or he is fated to send him an e-mail, or he will scream his name and the doctor will be coincidentally passing by and he will hear him.

Similarly, if Hegesarchus wants to come off without taking a punch, he has to keep his guard up. Our desire for outcomes and our knowledge of what it takes to bring those outcomes about will guide us about what we have to do to bring them about. *However*, it may be that someone from the audience will throw a can at him and that is how he will put his guard up.

The theory of co-fated events seems to suggest a solution to the problem of deliberation but this solution does not work. It should be clear to the agent that unless he takes a certain action at present, there is no way for the event to happen. But one can never know that one's action is necessary for the attainment of one's future end. One can act on probabilities, but if the event is already settled, consideration of probabilities is useless. Fate can have one refrain from this action or perform it to bring about the future event.

So, too, if fate has already decreed that the patient will recover, nothing he can do can alter that fact. His recovery, of course, requires preliminaries, but he cannot avoid taking them, either, since they too are fated. If he is fated to recover he

is also fated to do whatever is necessary to his recovery. Given that he is fated to recover, he is fated to call the doctor; if he is fated to call the doctor, and if it is necessary for him to use the phone, he is fated to use the phone as well. If, to phone, it is necessary that he picks up the phone, he is fated to pick up the phone, and the chain goes on forever.

Chrysippus' response is intended to make it look as if the thing in the future is in one's control. But its real effect is to show one that along that thing, there is the co-fated event not in one's control, either. If every earlier step is already determined, there is no action that one could take to change the outcome. If Chrysippus were asked to show that some earlier action does not happen by fate, he would reject this suggestion, because he claims everything happens by fate. If the Lazy Argument is a request to be shown that a fated event depends on an earlier fated event, it turns out to be a denial that a fated action can really be our action. It looks as if one's recovery is in one's control because it depends on his calling the doctor. But calling the doctor is not in his control any more than recovery, it is just another point in a fixed train of events.

Aristotle in *De Int. 9* emphasizes that we do not deliberate about what we believe to be already true or false. The theory of co-fated events is not a solution to the problem of deliberation, for it shows that an event already determined, is co-fated with another event already determined. We do not need to deliberate.

On Divination

Divination is the practice of predicting the future on the basis of events in nature, which were treated as signs of what will happen. It was commonly practised in the ancient Greek culture. In tragedies, we are told about characters who draw inferences about the future from flights of birds or from inspection of sacrificial victims. It was thought that diviners practiced a science with its own rules and principles. People generally accepted that future may be read from the present if the signs are treated with sufficient skill.

Hankinson shows that the nature of divinatory signs are of two kinds (Hankinson, 1999, p. 536):

A) Indicative sign: the sign-event is such that it is more than materially tied to that which it signifies. A determinate causal relationship holds between the sign and what it signifies.

B) Commemorative sign: Merely serves to call to mind that of which it is a signifier: there need not be a causal connection.

This distinction could be said to lie behind Chrysippus' attempt to evade the implications of treating divinatory theorems as conditionals. The argument follows like this (Long and Sedley, 1987):

1) Whoever is born at the rising of the Dog-star will not die at sea

(It really is the case that Fabius was born at that time)

2) If Fabius was born at the rising of the Dog-star, Fabius will not die at sea..

This looks like a sound conditional. But given the Stoics' account of its truth-conditions, for it to be sound, there must be a connection of relevance between the antecedent and the consequent – the consequent is true in virtue of the antecedent's truth. But Fabius' being born at that time is not a cause of his not dying at sea. So, Chrysippus suggests that divinatory propositions should be reformulated as negated conjunctions:

2') It is not the case both that Fabius is born at the rising of the Dog-star and that he dies at sea.

Cicero ridicules this reformulation. But he misses the point that such reformulations carry no commitment to there being any necessary relationship between the two component propositions.

Brennan, on the other hand, highlights another aspect concerning logic which could be used in analyzing the anti-Stoic argument against divination, and Chrysippus' response to it. The anti-Stoic argument claims that if divination is a science, than any statement that contradicts a given prediction is not merely false, but impossible. (Brennan, 2005).

In Stoic logic, a conditional of the form "if p, then q" is true in case there is a conflict between p and the negation of q. If Tabby is a cat, then tabby is an animal" is true in case there is a conflict between "Tabby is a cat" and "Tabby is not an animal".

If one of the conflicting statements is necessary, then the other must be impossible. Whatever conflicts with a necessary truth is not merely false, but also impossible.

Chrysippus accepts that true statements about the past are necessary, for the past is unchangeable. It is no longer possible for Fabius not to have been born at the rising of the Dog-star. But if it is now necessary that he was born then , and if there is a conflict between that fact and the proposition "Fabius dies at sea", then this proposition is not only false but also impossible. If divination tells us something will happen, any statement to the contrary is not just false, but also impossible, since it conflicts with a necessary truth about the past. But in principle, divination can tell all of the actions that occur and that one takes: it is impossible for one to do anything but the thing that in fact one will do. Thus divination rules out responsibility.

Chrysippus, as a response, denies that divination needs to use conditionals. Oracles can prophesy without claiming there is any conflict between the past statement and the denial of the prediction, thus they do not need to say that the events they predict will happen of necessity. Instead they can use negated conjunctions like "not both: p and q", which makes no claim about conflict. To say two things are not true together is a weaker claim than to say that they cannot be true together.

It could be said that the response is successful. Stoic belief in divination does not commit them to the necessity of the future provided that divination does not depend on theorems expressed as conditionals.

However, to say that divinatory theorems do not express necessary connections is not to show that there are no necessary connections between past and future. Perhaps the oracle observes those regularities because they are in fact

necessary. Whether that necessity is represented in the theorems, divination may depend on the underlying existence of necessary connections in nature. If divination depends on the existence of fate, a network of causes, then it must depend on the existence of necessary connections in nature. There, in principle, always exist "indicative signs" of future events.

Antecedent Causes and External Determination

One condition both compatibilists and incompatibilists think as necessary for holding us responsible for the occurrence of an event is that it should not be determined solely by factors external to the agent, for if the cause is purely external, the environment only would be praised or blamed for an event. So, can this "internality requirement" be met in a world governed by determinism?

What we can call the "externalist objection" was most probably advanced by Epicurus: if the world is governed by determinism and if every event is determined by prior causes, then everything we do is in fact fully determined by external factors alone. So, the internality requirement is not met, and there is no ground to ascribe responsibility to agents.

This version of the externalist objection is directed specifically against the Stoic theory of psychology of action. What is meant by "psychology of action" is the sequence of mental events that leads to an action, which takes place in the ruling part of the agent's soul, hegemonikon, which in the case of humans, consists in one's thought or mind.

Three phenomena occur in the mind before human action (Salles, 2005):

1) "Impression" (*phantasia*) is the mental state whose causal origin is usually an external event labelled as "impressor" (*phantaston*). In humans, impressions have a propositional content in virtue of which they are true or false. In

practical contexts, this propositional content is of the form "I ought to x", where x is an action.

2) "Assent" (*sunkatathesis*) is the mental act of accepting the propositional content of the impression as true (that I ought to x)

3) Impulse (*horme*), in the case of humans, is "a motion of mind towards something in the sphere of action" (Long and Sedley, 1987, p. 317). The object of impulse is the action expressed in a predicate embedded in the proposition (to x). Impulse is "the step before" the action, in that if the agent does not change his mind and nothing external hinders, action follows.

"Our actions" and "the events that happen to us" are alike in that in both cases it is us who satisfy a certain predicate that expresses an event. But in *actions*, the total set of causes that determine that we satisfy a certain predicate x involves our act of assent to the proposition "I ought to x". In events happening to us, however, the set of causes may contain only external causes; it does not include the assent of the agent. External determinism holds that the total set of causes that determine that we satisfy a predicate x involves *only* external factors. If the Stoic theory of psychology of action entails external determinism, the Stoic theory cannot meet the "internality requirement": Actions are in fact events that happen to us only by virtue of external factors. The externalist objection does hold that Stoic psychology of action cannot accommodate the internality requirement. This is so because, as the Stoics themselves emphasize, the action is the result of a causal chain that normally starts

from an external state or event. Hence, actions are ultimately determined by external factors, even if the chain involves, at some point, an act of assent.

Chrysippus distinguishes between types of causes. The occurrence of an action may be causally related to the prior occurrence of an external event without it being the case that the occurrence of the action is fully determined by the occurrence of this external event. Thus, the inference that actions are ultimately determined by external factors fails.

The argument follows in this way:

1) If all things happen by fate, then all things happen by antecedent causes
2) If this applies to impulse, it applies to assent, too.
3) If the cause of impulse is not up to us, neither is impulse itself
4) Then our actions are not up to us

Therefore praise and blame are not justified.

The argument seems valid, but the mistake lies in its taking antecedent causes to fully determine their effect, and this is the target of Chrysippus' counter-argument. Although every event is fully causally determined by the complete set of factors involved, the causal relation it bears to each of these factors taken separately is not fully determining. The existence of a causal relation between our impulses-assents and our external environment does not by itself imply that impulses and assents are fully determined by the external environment. In addition to external events, the occurrence of assents and impulses involves internal causes. Assents and impulses are brought about by the combination of these two elements.

Chrysippus does recognize "everything occurs by fate, therefore everything has an antecedent cause". This is compatible with the fact that assents involve external causes but are *not* fully determined by them alone. So, the "internality requirement" is met and it is not necessary to give up the thesis that everything has an antecedent cause. Otherwise, the only way to do justice to the internality requirement would be to claim that assent, the cause of action, lacks itself an antecedent cause – which would be to deny fate. Epicurus, for instance, used the notion of an uncaused atomic swerve as the only way to explain that our actions are not fully determined by external factors alone.

To illustrate the relationship between external and internal causes, Chrysippus gave the example of the movement of a cylinder. (Long and Sedley, 1987) Given an external push, the cylinder's capacity/ power to roll is triggered off; and what is important is that the cylinder is not given this power to roll from the push. It *is* the push that causes the cylinder to roll, but it does not cause the cylinder to have this power to roll. So, an explanation referring only to the external push would be incomplete.

Applied to the human case, the cylinder's power to roll corresponds to the nature of the agent's mind and the push corresponds to the external impression that the agent's mind receives and by which its nature is manifested. Any act of assent is antecedently caused by the complete set of factors that determines its occurrence; but it is not determined by external factors alone; the force and nature of the agent's mind is intrinsic to the agent and is not itself caused by the impression. Cicero claims that the external factor is the auxiliary and proximate cause, and the nature of the agent's mind is the perfect and primary cause of assent.

However, there is one condition: The internal cause of assent (the nature of the mind) must not be itself determined by any external factor. But it could be argued that my being the kind of person to assent to a certain impression was something determined by my education, just as the cylinder's capacity to roll is externally determined by the craftsman who imposed on it the cylindrical shape thanks to which it has the capacity to roll. Is not our nature, that is our character, formed by our genes, upbringing, education, conditioning, and society in general? How much is one responsible for the particular "shape" one has assumed in time? The quality of our own natures seems to be determined by fate, and out of our control, as much as external impressions are. If, because of causes some of which are set into motion even before our birth, and nearly all of which we have not willingly chosen, we have developed this particular personality, not another; would it not be unjust to say, when we react as we do when we are exposed to a certain impression, that we have freely deliberated to have the assent we have, and consequently, are responsible for the action? Are not our actions in fact nothing but reactions to the web of causes we are in?

This point, perhaps because of the importance given to self-formation and self-realization in modern thinking, is the one most severely attacked by modern scholars. Bertrand Russell, in his *A History of Western Philosophy,* explains that if the world is completely deterministic, whether one will be virtuous or not will be decided by natural laws. One is wicked because nature compels her to be, and the emotional freedom that virtue is supposed to provide for the Stoic sage is not possible for her. He later adds that although the Stoics urge that only the sinful will is a result of previous causes, one can see from how Marcus Aurelius explains his own virtue as due to the good influence of parents, grandparents, and teachers, that the

good will is just as much a result of previous causes. If virtue and sin alike are the inevitable result of previous causes, the motivation for moral effort would be paralysed. (Russell, 1945, pp. 255-67)

Stumpf, similarly, explains that Stoic moral philosophy views man as an actor in a drama where the role is selected by God, and man's duty is to act well the given part by controlling the only thing he can control, his attitude and emotions. However, he asks what the difference is between choosing one's role on the one hand, and one's attitude on the other, for God could have determined the attitude as well as the role. He emphasizes that the attitude and nature of the person could be as much part of him as the color of his eyes, but the Stoics never provided a complete answer to the question how providence rules everything and at the same time does not rule our attitudes (Stumpf, 1993, pp. 118-9).

Another criticism about Chrysippus' claim that even though our assents are caused and fated by the joint influence of impression and current character has to do with his definition of possibility. "Possible is that which admits of being true and which is not prevented by external factors from being true" (Diogenes Laertius 7.75; Long and Sedley, 1987, p. 231). Later on, in a critical passage by Cicero, the implication of this concept and relevant examples are given:

> You say that even things which will not be are possible. For example, that this jewel be broken, even if that will never be the case. And you say that it had not been necessary that Cypselus should rule in Corinth, even though the oracle of Apollo had foretold it a thousand years earlier. Cicero, On fate 13 (Long and Sedley, 1987, p.232)

It follows that p is possible in case:

1) P admits of being true, and

2) P is not prevented by external factors from being true

The first assertion is about "intrinsic fitness", a concept which was put forward by Philo, the student of logician Diodorus Cronus, who influenced Chrysippus in logic. Philo's most famous example is that it is possible for straw to be burned in the depths of ocean, because "burnability" is in the nature of straw. If we take Chrysippus' example, it is possible for a certain jewel to be broken although it will never be the case, since a jewel, by nature, is breakable.

However, Chrysippus includes another condition: the second assertion involves the assessment of external facts. It is possible for the jewel to be broken, since not only the jewel is intrinsically fit to break, but also there are no external factors preventing this to be the case.

Brennan successfully applies the Chrysippean concept of possibility on the psychology of assent (Brennan, 2005, pp. 263-5): Not-assenting to a certain impression is possible by the standards of the possibility definition: it admits of being true– there is nothing inherently incoherent or impossible about it; and one is not hindered from not-assenting by external factors. If so, the impression and my character are together sufficient to bring about my particular assent, but it was not necessary. But he goes on to argue that there is something wrong about this definition when it is applied on human psychology. If the first assertion assesses only the intrinsic fitness of the proposition; the second proposition would contain facts about the psychology of the agent who gives the assent, since they would be "external" to that proposition abstractly considered.

If "external" in the second proposition means "external to the agent's psychology", then the first assertion would cause a problem: my not-assenting to a

particular impression cannot admit of being true given the kind of subject that "I" am. The first proposition does not refer to the agent's psychology, since in theory he is intrinsically capable of both assenting and not assenting. The second proposition, on the other hand, takes the agent with all of his psychology and that is how it cannot be an external hindrance. Chrysippus defends that psychologically determined events (assents) are not necessitated by constructing a definition of the possible which excludes considerations of psychology. Chrysippus should accept that both internal and external causes are parts of fate and they necessitate the outcome.

So far, I have explained that the notion of fate is central in Stoicism, for it encompasses their theology, cosmogony, views of physics and modality. I have laid out the three major kinds of criticism they encountered and how these were responded to by Chrysippus, the greatest figure of the Old Stoa after the founder Zeno.

As we have seen, all three responses somehow do counter the particular objections that were raised against them; however, when compared to the bigger picture, the notion of an all-encompassing fate, they are not very successful in showing that there can be a meaningful ground for moral responsibility and one's making progress in a determined universe. To see if we can find such a ground, I now turn to their concept of human rationality.

CHAPTER 4

HUMAN RATIONALITY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Both human beings and other animals are fully endowed at birth with the capacity to behave on the basis of sensation and impulse, thanks to the psuche/ soul, which is the principle of sentient life. In the human case, however, psuche gradually develops the additional capacity of reason (logos) that differentiates human and divine psuche from that of animals, which means that humans and god have minds, but animals do not. The governing part of the soul (hegemonikon) is responsible for all mental functions as opposed to the Platonic distinction of reason, spirit and appetite. So, mind constitutes not only perceiving, thinking, feeling, but all that human beings do as intentional agents.

Psychic faculties common to all animals are sensation and impulse. Impression and impulse co-operate, as stimulus and response, in maintaining an animal's life. Endowed with self-perception, all animals are predisposed to observe and pursue things conducive to their natures and avoid anything harmful.

In the human case, mind is described as having two further faculties besides impression and impulse: Assent and reason.

Assent's link with rationality is evident from its function: the capacity to accept or reject propositions. Since only rational animals can entertain and respond to propositions, assent is a faculty strictly peculiar to mind. Animals are active, but they are not agents, the content of their impressions is non-conceptual.

"Assent" (*sunkatathesis*) is derived from a verb which signified "to go along with", or "to commit oneself to". Because its function is to evaluate impressions and to judge the truth-value of their propositional content, assent is treated as the very

sign of rationality. It is both a faculty of the mind and a name for the activities of this faculty. As a faculty of the mind, it constitutes a disposition in terms of which a mind can be assessed with respect to its cognitive powers and with respect to its moral character. Mediating between impressions and impulses, the faculty of assent distinguishes human beings' behavior from that of animals, which for them is in the form of an automatic movement as the response to an attractive or repellent impression.

According to the human account of action, the mind entertains the thought of something desirable, but it is the mind's assent to this thought that activates the impulse. If the mind declines to assent, the faculty of impulse remains inactive. The Stoics make assent, rather than impression, the principal cause of an action. Because assent is "in our power", human agents are held fully responsible both for what they do and for what they desire.

However, as we have seen above, it might be argued that although "assent is in our power" is the mainstream Stoic view and assent is taken to be especially important because it manifests the quality of the particular character from which it is issued, character itself is open to any kind of external influences. That is why, in practice, assent proves not to be completely in our power. What needs to be shown, then, is that within a world where everything is necessitated by fate, there is still room for a meaningful ascription of moral responsibility. The agent should not be treated as merely an instrument in a web of causes: it is not sufficient to claim that the actions of the agents are attributable to them and this is how they are supposed to be responsible.In other words, the agent should be responsible for his character. And what could give him this opportunity is *his possession of reason.*

For the Stoics, as mentioned above, only human beings are rational- only they have the power of reasoning. Reason is constituted by the possession of an open-ended set of particular concepts (subject to further developments and perfections), which are themselves regarded as a body of basic knowledge. Human beings are not born rational, and no child before "the age of reason" (which is either seven or fourteen according to sources) has any effective rational capacities at all. Children follow natural instincts, aided by parental guidance, in seeking their growth and survival in their environments. In doing so, they come to form original "natural" concepts of all sorts of objects and their properties. Human beings only become rational, or possessed of reason, when, after a long period of such exposure to the world around them, they have accumulated this basic set of concepts. Thus, as human beings develop, they get concepts of what it is to be a human being, of trees and plants, animals, various foods, colors, tastes and sounds. As they develop, they also get the concepts of good and bad, and certain other evaluative notions.

They get these concepts "naturally", because they do not reach them by calculating or inferring; they just naturally, given their experiences of the world around them, form the relevant concepts. This is how human beings are made, constituted by nature. They are born so as to develop in this way (and they do so develop unless some extreme circumstance prevents it). In fact, because they do not reach their basic concepts by any sort of reasoning, but simply by a natural process of development, Stoics think these are guaranteed to be correct concepts, whose content is guaranteed to be true of some of what the world contains. They (their minds) have contributed nothing to the formation of these concepts, so there is no possibility of distortion in them from their minds.

Being rational, however, does not simply mean having basic knowledge and basic thinking capacities. When they reach "the age of reason" and become rational beings, their nature becomes such that they *use* their rationality in *all* of their perceptual experiences, in everything they think and do, by a necessity of their nature. This means that when a man sees a dog, he uses his relevant concepts, thinking that the thing he sees *looks like that*, like it has the properties contained in his dog-concept. And he must either accept this impression (judge that it instantiates the characteristics contained in the concept), or he must reject it or suspend judgement. Being rational means operating in this way, by the necessity of one's nature. (Cooper, 2003)

As mentioned before, because reason (logos) judges the impressions, rejecting some and accepting others, it is the determining faculty of the human psuche. It so influences the other mental faculties that, instead of remaining non-rational as in the case of animals, they too become rational. What is merely impulse in the animal psuche becomes "rational impulse", impulse shaped by reason, in the human mind. Similarly, reason makes every human impression rational, making it a thought. It is because we have the capacity of reason functioning in this way that we can be praised or blamed for our actions. Reason gives human beings freedom of the kind required for moral responsibility.

But what is the kind of power involved in reason?

Origen, *On Principles* III 1.2-4 (partly in Long and Sedley, 1987): Here, Origen says, if someone claims the external thing [impression] is such that it is impossible for him to withstand, he should *pay attention to* (epistenai) his own internal affections to see if there occurs in him some approval and assent and some

turning of the mind (hegemonikon) towards the particular thing because of certain plausibilities. In a situation in which the akratic man fails, some other individual's reason could push back the temptation, since by practicing he has made it stronger and more secure in his beliefs about what is morally good.

This passage is especially important because it gives us a hint about how a person can change the internal factors which determine the kinds of assents he issues, and which are heavily prone to be influenced by external factors especially in the pre-rational period of childhood. It is the idea of "paying attention to one's internal affections", which implies the idea of *self-consciousness*. It is because of the element of self-consciousness in human reason that a human being does have a genuine ability to change his immediate affections, which are to be understood as his beliefs.

We have a similar idea also in Epictetus: Epictetus argues that rationality is reflexive, that it studies itself. The nature of rationality is to make correct use of itself. It is given to humans for the correct use of mental impressions, but because it is itself a system made up of impressions it studies itself, too:

> Every craft or faculty has a special area as its field of study. When the craft or faculty belongs to the same species as the object of study, it necessarily studies itself too. But when it is heterogeneous, it cannot study itself. Thus, shoemaking works on leather, yet the craft itself is quite distinct from leather. Therefore it does not study itself. To take another example, the art of grammar deals with written speech, but that does not make the art of grammar itself written speech, does it?
> *Certainly not.*
> Therefore it cannot study itself. Why, then, has rationality [logos] been passed on to us by nature?
> *For the correct use of mental impressions*
> So, what is rationality itself?
> *A structure made up of various impressions*
> Hence it naturally studies itself too.
>
> Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.20

Epictetus takes this faculty to be God's special gift to human beings. The essence of goodness is God who has given each person a portion of himself. This is volition (*prohairesis*). It is:

1) the reasoning and *self-studying* faculty;
2) the faculty that can make correct use of impressions (assenting)
3) the faculty of positive and negative impulse and of desire and aversion. It is the purposive and *self-conscious* center of a person.

Long points to an important difference between Epictetus and earlier Stoics (Long, 2002): Earlier Stoics referred to rationality with their term for the human mind, hegemonikon, which means "governing faculty". The human hegemonikon is the seat of rationality and the center of the person, one's moral disposition.

In Epictetus' use, however, hegemonikon applies to the souls of animals who lack rationality as well as to human beings. *Prohairesis*, on the other hand, is confined to humans and God. It is God's gift of a rational, *self-scrutinizing* and motivating faculty.

As we have seen, in both Origen's passage and Epictetus' view, one's being conscious of his own self does matter. What is it that being self-consciously aware of an impulse and of one's own self assenting to the beliefs behind actions gives us? The answer is given by Engberg-Pedersen: Because he has reason, a human being is *distanced* from his own immediate understanding. He is capable of seeing some belief or impulse from the outside, objectively, thanks to this distance. This distance, which is implied in reason, gives freedom, for it is a distance from one's subjective viewpoint which makes it possible that one could change the results of applying

one's subjective viewpoint alone. In possessing the capacity for self-consciousness, human beings possess freedom in relation to their own immediate beliefs. Reason is a capacity to extend infinitely towards objective truth. The capacity to transcend the subjective viewpoint in deliberation is what distinguishes humans' relationship to the world from other animals. The ability to extend one's immediate understanding of the world by fitting in more and more information gives to man a genuine freedom of the will. (Engberg-Pedersen, 1990).

This approach, however, should not be taken as a break in the causal chain of events. We are still in the boundaries of the Stoic fate which determines the individual both internally and externally: someone else in the agent's position could have behaved differently, but he, as he was what he was, could not have done otherwise. Still, thanks to the self-conscious and self-scrutinizing functions of his reason, he would be aware of the kinds of assent he has given, he could understand that somehow his character failed him, and other kinds of dispositions would lead to different results. It is true that whether he will or will not be able to reach his goals he would still be influenced by external events. But he would know this as well, he could always attempt to reach a better understanding of the world, and hence, if possible, do the opposite of what he has done. This possibility belongs to him in virtue of his being human; for human beings have the general ability to act otherwise, not just in the sense that they *may* act otherwise (as abstract agents without their psychology); but through their self-consciousness, they would see the propriety of acting otherwise because they could see themselves objectively and may attempt consciously, in deliberation, to reach a better understanding of how they should act.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In this work, I have tried to explain what the Stoics understood by the term "fate" and how they defined its characteristics. Then, I have laid out the three principal sorts of criticism which the Old Stoa, especially Chrysippus had to answer to prove the moral responsibility of agents in a determined world. I have argued that Chrysippean solutions to such criticism are somehow inadequate to treat the individual as a real locus of responsibility. Finally, I have stated that the individual could be meaningfully held to be responsible thanks to his possession of self-conscious and self-scrutinizing reason.

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