

THE SUFFICIENCY OF VIRTUE FOR HAPPINESS: NOT SO EASILY OVERTURNED?¹

1. Introduction: Alexander of Aphrodisias(?), mantissa 20

The sufficiency of virtue for happiness is a central Stoic doctrine. Indeed it can be argued that it is one of the doctrines that *define* the Stoic position;² and it was the subject of extensive controversy in antiquity, coming under attack both from Academics and from Peripatetics. And Peripatetics had a particular interest in the topic, for Aristotle had already discussed it in *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.8–10, in a way which, to say the least, left room for a range of divergent interpretations.³

The objections that were raised against the Stoic position in antiquity differ in their degree of persuasiveness. Some indeed point to fundamental differences of opinion of the sort that are not easily, if at all, reconcilable by argument. But others simply misinterpret or misrepresent the Stoic position. It is with some of the latter that the present paper will chiefly be concerned. Its aims are therefore limited even though the issue is important. It is indeed no news to anyone that ancient writers engaged in philosophical polemic misrepresent their opponents' positions and smuggle their own assumptions into their attacks, so that inter-school debate sometimes resembles, if not a dialogue of the deaf, at least one of those who are sometimes deliberately hard of hearing.

My central concern will be with a text of ten pages attributed to Alexander of Aphrodisias, and no doubt connected in some way with his school, which marshals a whole series of arguments against the claim that virtue alone is sufficient for happiness. It appears at pages 159–68 of the *Supplement to the Book On the Soul*, or *Mantissa*,

¹ This is a revised version of a paper delivered to the Cambridge Philological Society on 7 October 1999. I am grateful to all who contributed to the discussion there, and especially to Geoffrey Lloyd, Michael Reeve, Malcolm Schofield, David Sedley and Gisela Striker, and to the anonymous referee for the *Proceedings*, whose comments have prompted some very necessary clarifications not only of expression but also of thought. I am also very much indebted both to those who have made suggestions when my views on Alexander, *mantissa* 159–68 were presented in a more extended way to a seminar in London or by correspondence, notably Richard Janko, Inna Kupreeva, Richard Sorabji, Bob Todd and Julius Tomin, and also to those who have already discussed parts of it in print: notably Gisela Striker, to whom, as will rapidly become evident, much in what follows is indebted not only as regards the particular points she has made about our specific text, but also for the general analysis of Stoic ethical theory.

² Becker (1998) has recently tried to reconstruct a Stoic position for our own times. His system rejects one distinctive feature of ancient Stoicism, its refusal to accept any human emotions other than the *εὐπάθειαι* which have the sages' and others' virtue as their objects. But it does share another distinctive feature of ancient Stoicism, the claim that virtue alone is sufficient for happiness. On Becker see further my review at *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 98.11.12 (<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/bmcr/1998/1998-11-12.html>).

³ Long (1968); Annas (1993) 364–84; Sharples (1999) 88–91.

and is the 20th of 25 sections of that collection according to the most logical division (which our oldest MS, Venetus Marcianus graecus 258, henceforth V, does not actually follow).⁴

Unusually, MS V numbers the individual arguments within §20: the only other sections in the *mantissa* where this has been done are 3, 4, 6, 7 and 9,⁵ but in 7 and 9 the numbering breaks off part way through. As we shall see shortly, there are other sections where the arguments could just as well have been numbered as in these six, but, for whatever reason, there is no evidence from V that this had been done. In our §20 V counts 37 arguments. As usual in such cases, there is room for dispute about the exact number. At 161.26, within argument XIII (161.21–162.3), the MS rightly marks a new paragraph, but does not insert a new number, and that is because the argument that starts at this point does not, like all the others, begin with ἔτι, ‘Moreover’.⁶ Conversely, however, the last numbered argument of all (XXXVII, 168.17–20), numbered separately because it begins with an ἔτι, is exceedingly short and is really more of a concluding flourish to the quite lengthy preceding argument than an independent one.

There are not a few collections of arguments like this in the *mantissa* – for the incorporeality of the soul (*mantissa* 3), of qualities (*mantissa* 6) and of light (*mantissa* 13), for the existence of the elements in unmixed form (*mantissa* 7) and for the hotness of air (*mantissa* 8), against various theories of vision (*mantissa* 9–12), for the unity of the virtues (*mantissa* 18) and for justice being natural (*mantissa* 19). But §20 is the longest both in terms of absolute length and in terms of the number of arguments. An analogy that suggests itself is with the 29 arguments for the mortality of the soul in Lucretius, book 3.

⁴ There is an illogicality in the division earlier in the work, the MS indicating new sections at 107.21 and 107.29, where the topics of intellect *in habitu* and productive intellect are respectively introduced. But it is more natural to regard the whole of 106.29–110.3 (at least) as forming a single discussion of the various aspects of intellect (106.29–107.20 being concerned with material intellect). And 106.29–113.24 in their present condition constitute a discussion of intellect, whatever the processes by which the text arrived at its present state (on which see Sharples (1987) 1211–14, Rashed (1997) 192–5, Opsomer and Sharples (2000)). To avoid confusion, throughout this paper I will use ‘section’ exclusively to refer to the 25 sections into which the *mantissa* as a whole is divided, referring to subdivisions within these as ‘arguments’, ‘objections’ or ‘divisions’. I also use Roman numbers exclusively for arguments within §20, and Arabic numerals for sections of the *mantissa* as a whole.

⁵ Respectively 113.25–118.4, 118.5–119.20, 122.16–125.4, 125.5–126.3, and 127.27–130.12 in Bruns (1887). The numbering in all these sections is in uncials, as it is in §20. In addition, the last section of the *mantissa* (§25, on fate), which does not as a whole have the form of a collection of arguments separated by ‘moreover’, bears traces of two separate sets of numbering: ‘1’ and ‘2’ appear in uncials at 183.1 and 183.4, ‘2’ to ‘5’ in *minuscules* at 184.4, 7, 10, 13. In §4 there is a main sequence of numbered divisions one of which is further divided into numbered subdivisions: both sequences are in uncials, but the former, like all the numbering within sections so far mentioned in this note, has the status of the letters as numbers indicated by a diagonal stroke above and to the right of the letter, the latter by a horizontal stroke centred above the letter, which is the method also used throughout for the numbering of whole *sections*. In §9 three groups of arguments, each group identified in the margin by a note of its overall aim, are numbered by arguments within the group, the first number prefixed by επιχ(εἰρησις); all the numbers are uncial letters, but those in the first and third groups have the diagonal stroke, those in the second, clearly in order to distinguish the groups, have the horizontal one.

⁶ There are some other cases too where one might argue that a numbered argument could be similarly subdivided, but none where there is so marked a change of subject as there is within argument XIII.

Much is unclear about how these collections of arguments were assembled (let alone how they subsequently came to be grouped, along with other types of discussion, into a whole book attributed to Alexander). It is not clear whether the material in each collection was arranged all at once or by a process of accretion in stages, whether and how far there is a systematic structure, and whether each individual argument is meant to stand alone. Were the arguments in a collection intended to be presented *en bloc*, in which case any implicit circularity with one argument depending on another might be apparent, or were they intended for use individually in a dialectical context which would make it harder for opponents to identify hidden assumptions? They differ from the physical *Problems* attributed to Aristotle – which similarly seem to be records of discussions within a school which have developed by a process of accretion – in not having an exploratory or constructive purpose.⁷ The remaining options are either that they are gymnastic exercises held within the school in private, in a context where everyone was predisposed to accept the position being argued for anyway, or that they are intended to convince those who might be influenced by the arguments of other schools. We know that pupils would hear teachers from more than one school;⁸ it is less clear how far in Alexander's time there was public inter-school debate in spoken as well as in written form, or how far students would have engaged their teachers in inter-school dialectic ('But I've just heard the Stoics say ...'; 'Well, what you can tell them is this ...').

Another question which naturally suggests itself is that of the relation between the arguments in *mantissa* 20 and anti-Stoic arguments known from other, and specifically Academic, sources; as we shall see, there are some parallels but also some differences. To do more than point these out – to fill in the gaps in the story of the development of anti-Stoic polemic in the various schools – is difficult given the state of our evidence. Elsewhere in the body of work attributed to Alexander, too, the question of the extent of Academic influence is a controversial one.⁹

2. *The role of bodily and external 'goods'*

The Stoics are named only once in *mantissa* 20. They were not indeed the only ancient school to claim that virtue was sufficient for happiness; Epicurus too attracted hostility for his claim that the wise man will be happy on the rack or in the bull of Phalaris, even though he will also groan.¹⁰ Interestingly, where the Stoics are named in our text Epicurus is too, and his position is formulated in Stoic terms:

⁷ I am grateful to Geoffrey Lloyd for emphasising this.

⁸ Cicero heard in Athens both the Epicurean Zeno (*Tusc. disp.* 3.38) and the Academic Antiochus (*Brutus* 315); Galen in Pergamum heard a Stoic and a Platonist and visited a Peripatetic and an Epicurean (*De propr. anim. affect.* V pp.41–2 Kühn).

⁹ Cf. Sharples (1983) 147–8. Mansfeld (1988) 194–5 suggests that Academic arguments may have been transmitted to Alexander through Neopyrrhonist sources.

¹⁰ Diogenes Laertius 10.118, cf. Cicero, *Tusculans* 2.17–18.

[virtue] is concerned with the selection of pleasant things, according to Epicurus, or with the selection of things in accordance with nature, as the Stoics think,¹¹ or with that of things which are appropriate in whatever other way it may be. (160.4–6).

ἐκλογή ‘selection’ and the cognate verb ἐκλέγεσθαι are Stoic jargon; they do not appear in Usener’s *Glossarium Epicureum* or in the *index verborum* to Arrighetti’s edition of Epicurus’ works.¹²

Nevertheless, the claim that virtue is sufficient for happiness was identified with the Stoics more than with anyone else, and many of the objections in our collection relate to distinctively Stoic positions, for instance on suicide. I shall therefore refer to those whose position is under attack as ‘the Stoics’, in the interests of conciseness and clarity as much as anything else.

The Stoics regarded virtue alone as good and wickedness alone as bad; everything else is indifferent, but among indifferents some, such as health and wealth, those to which we have a natural affinity or appropriation, are ‘preferred’ and their opposites ‘unpreferred’; in normal circumstances we should select the preferred indifferents and reject the unpreferred, and it is this selection (but not, emphatically, the actual *achieving* of such things, which is beyond our control), when carried out for the right reason and, what for the Stoics amounts to the same thing, by a person with the right character – i.e. a Stoic sage – which constitutes virtue and so is sufficient for happiness. The reason for speaking of ‘selecting’ preferred indifferents rather than ‘choosing’ them is that virtue alone is good and virtue alone is therefore a proper object of choice. Nevertheless, Chrysippus allowed talk of preferred indifferents as ‘good’, according to common usage, provided we do not let the term mislead us;¹³ and for the sake of brevity I will on occasion refer to ‘bodily goods’ (such as health) and ‘external goods’ (such as wealth), it being understood that these are ‘good’ from a Peripatetic standpoint, but not from a Stoic one.

There are in principle two (not indeed mutually exclusive) grounds on which bodily and external goods could be regarded as necessary for happiness. One might suppose that

(1) the possession of things other than virtue is in itself a necessary part of happiness

or that

(2) virtue is necessary for happiness, and things other than virtue are necessary means for the practice of virtue.

¹¹ Pohlenz (1948–49) II 174 noted that this formulation is post-Chrysippean. Cf. Diogenes of Babylon and Antipater of Tarsus as reported by Diogenes Laertius 7.87–9, Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 2.21 129.1–5; and Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2, p. 75.11ff. Wachsmuth.

¹² Usener (1977); Arrighetti (1973).

¹³ Chrysippus *ap.* Plutarch, *Stoic. rep.* 1048a = *SVF* III.137 = LS 58H.

(1) was the position held by the second-century B.C. Peripatetic Critolaus; (2) on the other hand is compatible with, though it need not imply,¹⁴ the view that

(3) things other than virtue have *only* instrumental value for happiness, a position which was advanced in antiquity in opposition to Critolaus' view.¹⁵

As Julia Annas has pointed out, our section of the *mantissa* contains both arguments that appeal to (1), arguing that happiness is impossible in unfavourable circumstances, and arguments that appeal to (2), emphasising the need for resources for the *exercise* of virtue.¹⁶ Two of the objections in our section of the *mantissa* indeed echo Critolaus' definition of happiness as 'fullness of good things'.¹⁷ Since (1) and (2) are not incompatible, the presence of arguments turning on both does not render our collection of arguments as a whole inconsistent, but it does constitute a difference of emphasis – whether or not that has any implications for the actual origin of these arguments.

Of the arguments falling under (2), some emphasise the notion of instruments used, others that of subject-matter,¹⁸ while yet others combine the two;¹⁹ in terms of the analogy

¹⁴ For everyone in the debate is agreed that virtue is a *necessary* condition for happiness; and there is no reason why someone should not hold that things other than virtue have both instrumental and intrinsic value for happiness. Objection (XVII) in our text argues that 'there are many things which the person who possesses virtue needs: health, strength, prosperity, and many other things; and this is so *also* according to those according to whom virtue is supposed to be self-sufficient for happiness' (163.2–3; my emphasis).

¹⁵ That happiness is a 'fullness' or completion (σμπλήρωμα) made up from goods of the soul, goods of the body and external goods is the position attributed to Aristotle by Diogenes Laertius 5.30 and to Critolaus at Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2.7.3b, p. 46.10–20 Wachsmuth; it is also referred to, without Critolaus being named, at Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2.7.14, p. 126.22–127.2 Wachsmuth. The first of the two discussions in Stobaeus expressly rejects the view it attributes to Critolaus, arguing rather that *bodily and external goods are used* by virtuous activity; a similar view is later held by Aspasius (*In Eth. Nic.* 24.3ff.). The second discussion in Stobaeus does not explicitly refer to 'use', but states that *bodily and external goods are said to produce happiness because they contribute something by their presence* (126.20–2). Both of the sections in Stobaeus of which these two discussions respectively form part have commonly been attributed to Arius Didymus; but whereas Göransson in his recent detailed study ((1995) 220 and n. 2) accepts the attribution of the *latter* section to this author – whatever the problems in identifying him and his writings generally, on which see Göransson (1995) 203–26 – he argues forcefully (221–6) against the attribution to him also of the former. Cf. Annas (1993) 36–7, 413–18; Sharples (1999) 87.

¹⁶ Annas (1993) 397–9. For arguments appealing to (1) see §§6–7 below.

¹⁷ (XVI) 162.27; (XXXV) 167.26. Significantly enough, the historical Stoic position was rather that happiness was fullness or completion of *virtues* (*SVF* III 73, 106, 107); I am grateful to Inna Kupreeva for drawing my attention to this.

¹⁸ The latter particularly clearly at 164.32–4: 'they themselves say that *bodily and external (goods) are for the sake of virtue, so that it can select and acquire them; so that these things are useful for the end*'. See also below, at n. 46, and Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 4.6 39.3 (*SVF* III.114): 'the intermediates occupy the position of matter'. Objection (VI) claims that the external things with which the activity of virtue is concerned are not merely, as those under attack are said to claim, *necessary conditions* for human existence, but have an active force, setting virtue in motion; 'For these things do not, as *they* say, occupy the place (merely) of *sine quibus non*, but they set virtue in motion and are causes of its acting and being active. For it aims at them as craftsmen [aim] at their own proper material. At any rate, they say that actions will be done away with for them if these things do not, by the differences among them, attract the virtues and set them in motion' (160.12–16; cf. Striker (1996) 302).

¹⁹ At 161.4 every craft needs things '*on which and through which to be active*', and at 166.34 virtue needs both matter and instruments.

of the carpenter, the first is illustrated by the relation of the carpenter to his tools, the second by that of the carpenter to the wood. In fact, however, the distinction may be an unreal one. The reason for selecting, for example, wealth is presumably to use it – certainly so if we are not arguing that external goods are necessary for happiness quite apart from their contribution to virtue, which belongs with (1) rather than (2); and conversely, while health might be thought of as necessary equipment for the practice of virtue, preserving one's health is also a matter of appropriate selection and hence an opportunity for exercising virtue.

Arguments VII (160.20–4) and XI (161.5–16) claim that for 'selection in accordance with nature', and hence for virtuous action,²⁰ one needs a healthy body – which seems questionable from the Stoic point of view – and senses, which are external to virtue. One might indeed suppose that someone whose senses are malfunctioning, or who does not possess them at all, cannot act virtuously, though it is not clear that the absence of just one sense, e.g. sight, would have this consequence; David Sedley has suggested that the Stoics would allow that one could still *be virtuous* even if all one's senses had ceased to function, provided one still had one's reason, but here the objector could argue that the possession of virtue, as opposed to the exercise of virtue, is not enough for happiness (below, §3). Others of the objections claim that the virtuous person may suffer mental derangement and melancholia, and ask how a person in this position can be regarded as happy (161.16–21, 165.23–6). This seems simply to disregard Chrysippus' recognition that virtue can be *lost* through melancholia.²¹ And one of the arguments turning on the irrationality of suicide if virtue is sufficient for happiness has as a premiss the claim (168.8) that virtue never abandons the wise man, which was the position of Cleanthes but not that of Chrysippus.²²

3. *The possession and the exercise of virtue*

Annas suggests that the objections which invoke (2) are particularly hard for the Stoics to deal with if they appeal to the notion of virtue as a skill, which is repeatedly alluded to in our series of objections.²³ They might indeed claim that a skill might be possessed without being exercised, in the ordinary sense of that term, just as the Stoic sage is both a king and a cobbler even if he is neither ruling or cobbling;²⁴ but this approach is, she contends, counter-intuitive.

This distinction between possessing virtue and exercising it is important for several of the arguments in *mantissa* 20.²⁵ The first part of argument (II) at first sight seems only to show that virtue and happiness are not synonymous terms:

²⁰ Above, n. 11, and below, n. 44.

²¹ Diogenes Laertius 7.127.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Annas (1993) 397–9. Cf. Striker (1996) 307.

²⁴ Diogenes Laertius 7.122 = *SVF* III.617; Horace, *Satires* 1.3.124ff.

²⁵ Cf. 159.31–3, 'Moreover, if every craft produces something other than itself and not itself, but virtue according to them is a craft that produces happiness, happiness, which is brought about by virtue, will be different from it', and 160.1–20.

Moreover, if the person who enquires whether virtue is self-sufficient for happiness is not conducting an absurd enquiry, but the person who enquires whether virtue is self-sufficient for virtue *is* conducting an absurd enquiry, each of these enquiries is not the same. But if these are not the same, virtue and happiness are not the same thing. But the first: so the second. (159.22–6)

For here we might well object that to refute

(4) virtue and happiness are synonymous

is not to refute

(5) virtue is sufficient for happiness.²⁶

However, the continuation shows that what the author has in mind is not just that virtue and happiness are not synonymous, but rather that there is a difference between possessing virtue and exercising it:

If then virtue and happiness are different, it is clear that being happy does not (consist) in possessing virtue, just as playing the pipe does not (consist) in possessing the art of pipe-playing. So happiness does not (consist) purely in the possession and condition of virtue. (159.26–9)

In objection (XXVIII) we are told that virtue needs other things not only to be active but also to *exist*; perhaps this is just a slip – no use seems to be made of the point in the subsequent argument.²⁷ It may be an unfortunate slip, though, for the following reason. What else does virtue require in order to exist? Presumably, a living human being:

(6) In order to be virtuous one needs to be alive.²⁸

And indeed objection (XXV) refers by implication to the need for life. It uses it, however, rather to argue that

(7) virtue is not *sufficient for happiness* because in order to live well one needs to be alive.²⁹

²⁶ We might also note that 165.32–5 treats (4) and (5) as equivalent: see below, at n. 32.

²⁷ ‘Moreover, if in general virtue needs certain things in order to exist and to act in any way at all, and a person’s happiness consists in activity in accordance with it, how can it be self-sufficient for happiness, when it needs certain external things for its being active, in which happiness consists?’ (165.26–9). Alternatively, David Sedley has suggested interpreting πρὸς τὸ εἶναι τε καὶ ὁπωσοῦν ἐνεργεῖν as a hendiadys, so that εἶναι has no independent force.

²⁸ One does not also need wisdom, for that is synonymous with virtue.

²⁹ True, as we shall see, the Stoics allow that the sage will commit suicide in certain circumstances – something which the critics wrongly think they can use against the claim that virtue is sufficient for happiness; but in order to commit a virtuous suicide one does need to be alive in the first place.

Moreover, for the piper playing well consists in playing, and playing is not indifferent for the piper with a view to playing well and his own proper end;³⁰ and similarly in the case of the other crafts. Just so, if for the person who is happy being happy consists in living well, living will not for him be a matter of indifference with regard to living well, but will contribute to living well. But if so, virtue is not self-sufficient for the end, if according to this we gain not living, but only (living) well. (165.12–18)³¹

If however virtue presupposes life (6), it seems difficult to argue that virtue is not sufficient for happiness because life is needed as well (7).

Objection (XXX) compares virtue to the art of navigation, suggesting that, as the latter is not the same as success in voyaging, so the former is not sufficient for happiness:

Moreover, either virtue achieves the end by making use of certain things in addition, or entirely by itself. If by making use of things in addition, it is not self-sufficient for the end; if by itself, virtue and happiness will be the same thing.³² But we see in the case of the crafts that such a thing is impossible. For in the case of each three things are needed for the end: the end, the one who achieves the end, and that which introduces the end. The one who achieves is the doctor or navigator, the end is successful voyaging or health, and what introduces it is medicine or the art of navigation. So in the case of happiness the one who achieves it is the wise man, the end is happiness, and what introduces it is virtue. So, just as medicine is not health, but produces health, and the art of navigation, which produces success in voyaging, is not success in voyaging, just so neither will virtue, which produces happiness, be happiness. For none of the things that produces anything produces itself. So virtue is not self-sufficient for the happiness that is brought about by it. (165.32–166.6)

The Stoics, or some of them, however claimed that wisdom (the art of living well) is analogous to acting or dancing, which have their end in the performance itself, rather than to navigation or medicine.³³ The Stoic sage is, precisely, a virtuoso in living.³⁴ Successful voyaging, on the other hand, one might suppose, depends on arriving at the destination; and medicine is not practised primarily for the sake of practising medicine.³⁵ Indeed – a point I owe to Julius Tomin – in using analogies which suggest

³⁰ Delete τὸ ἀλλ'εἶν as a gloss; I owe this suggestion to Richard Janko.

³¹ I.e., to achieve happiness you need not only to live well, but to be alive. Cf. Striker (1996) 302 n. 8. – Perhaps ζῆν should be restored in the text after εἶν: I owe this suggestion to Richard Janko.

³² Above, n. 26.

³³ Cicero, *De finibus* 3.24 = *SVF* III.11 = LS 64H. Cf. however Striker (1996) 262, 313–15.

³⁴ Becker (1998) 106ff.

³⁵ Annas (1993) 402; Striker (1996) 245.

that happiness is an *end-product* of virtue, as health is of medicine or arriving safely of navigation, our author is, consciously or not, implying a conception of the relation between virtue and happiness which is not correct even for Aristotle.³⁶

True, the example of navigation *could* be interpreted in a way that not only disregards the question whether the ship arrives, but even evaluates the navigator's performance in such a way that adverse circumstances do not hinder it but enhance it. It is so interpreted by Seneca in a discussion in his *Letter* 85.³⁷ Seneca first reports (31) that some Stoics claim that a storm makes the navigator worse in his work but not in his art; in other words, it makes *success* less likely, but that is irrelevant to the question of how good the navigator is. The Peripatetics, Seneca says, reply to this that poverty similarly makes a wise person worse, not by removing virtue but by hindering its work. Seneca first responds by suggesting (32) that the parallel is not a good one because, while the aim of the pilot is to arrive, that of the virtuous person is to act rightly. But he then comments (33) that in his own view neither the pilot's art *nor* its application (*administratio*) is made worse by a storm. The storm does not hinder the pilot's work, indeed it makes it more conspicuous;³⁸ rather, it hinders its *success*.³⁹ And at this point Seneca has provided an answer – whether or not we find it convincing – to objection (IX) in *mantissa* 20:

Moreover activity in accordance with each craft is of two sorts, one in conducive⁴⁰ [circumstances], as for the pipe-player if he is healthy in body and has the sort of pipes he wants and nothing external troubles him, the other in [circumstances] that are not to be wished for and are opposite to the conducive ones. As for the other crafts the end is in activities that are concerned with what is wished for and which are in conducive [circumstances],⁴¹ so also in the case of virtue, if indeed it is a craft.

As Striker has argued, the performance of the virtuoso on an inferior instrument may in a sense be a *better performance* than that of the inferior player on a better instrument,

³⁶ See Ackrill (1974).

³⁷ Seneca, *Ep. Mor.* 85.31–8; cf. Striker (1996) 314 and n. 22, following a suggestion by Donini.

³⁸ In *Ep. Mor.* 66.47–52 Seneca – saying indeed that he will speak *audacius* – argues that adversities are desirable because they give one an opportunity to display virtue, citing Epicurus' deathbed letter as an example. Striker (1996) 278 comments 'It should be said, to Epictetus' credit, that he thinks this is nonsense, cf. *Diss.* 1.6.35–6.'

³⁹ Seneca goes on to argue (34) that the storm harms a pilot not as a pilot but as a voyager. The pilot's art is concerned with the good of others (presumably he is concerned also with the good of himself, since he wants to reach dry land too, but this is concern for himself *qua* other, i.e. *qua* voyager); the sage's art, on the contrary, is concerned also with himself (36). It is not hindered in that respect by adverse circumstances, and indeed (38) the sage, even if poor, can help others by showing how poverty should be dealt with.

⁴⁰ For προηγουμένα = 'conducive circumstances' (I owe the translation to Richard Janko), or 'favourable circumstances', in the context of virtuous activity and therefore of happiness, cf. Alexander, *Ethical problems* 25 148.31–2, and the discussion in Sharples (1990) 64–5 n. 220 ad loc.; Giusta (1961–2) 229–31; Grilli (1969) 439–44; Huby (1983) 125–6.

⁴¹ Read προηγουμένοις in 161.2 for the MSS προηγουμένους with Giusta (1961–2) 254 and Huby (1983) 126. Cf. Grilli (1969) 460–61.

even though it does not *sound* better, and similarly the poor person's small gift may be more generous than the rich person's slightly larger one.⁴²

4. Suicide

Arguments I (159.16–22) and XXXVI (168.1–17) claim that the sage's being prepared, in certain circumstances, to commit suicide shows that a virtuous life is not sufficient for happiness; for if it were, why should the sage leave a life which is virtuous? The Stoic sage will indeed leave life by committing suicide in certain circumstances (for example, to save his country or his friends).⁴³ But the objection simply misses the point against the Stoics. Virtuous action is the performance of the appropriate action in the given circumstances, on the basis of a settled disposition and for the right reason.⁴⁴ In any given set of circumstances one selection will be appropriate, and another not. In that case, however, in any given set of circumstances either it is appropriate for a sage to commit suicide, or it is not. And if it is appropriate for the sage to commit suicide, it cannot be appropriate for the sage to stay alive. *A fortiori*, therefore, if the sage, *per impossibile*, did not commit suicide when it is appropriate that he should, he would cease to be virtuous. So how can the critics argue that the sage's suicide constitutes relinquishing a virtuous life? On the contrary, in the circumstances where it is appropriate, it is the one way in which he can *preserve* his virtue. True, it may seem paradoxical to suggest that by committing suicide he is maintaining a virtuous *life*; but the fact remains that a sage's suicide is so far from being a *rejection* of the virtuous life that it is the *only way* of preserving virtue.⁴⁵

Objection (VIII), arguing that preferred indifferents are necessary for the activity of virtue, claims that suicide is on account of preferred indifferents:

the making away with oneself is not on account of inability to *select* these things, which is the task of virtue, but on account of their not being present, which does not depend on (virtue). (160.28–9)

⁴² Striker (1996) 319–20; cf. Annas (1993) 397–8.

⁴³ cf. *SVF* III.758, 759, 765, 768. 159.19–21 here = *SVF* III.767. With the present argument cf. Alexander. *In top.* 166.33–5 = *SVF* III.67. One may note that the criticism of the Stoic position on suicide at Augustine, *City of God* 19.4 does not share with the *mantissa* the specific point that the sage who commits suicide will be abandoning *virtue*.

⁴⁴ It is the latter two requirements that mark the difference between the sage and the non-sage whose action is merely appropriate and not virtuous. It is indeed, as Professor Striker has shown, and contrary to frequent supposition both in antiquity and more recently, not the case that it is the relation of virtuous action to preferred indifferents that explains why it is virtuous; the end is not *defined* as a certain choice among indifferents: Striker (1996) 227–31, 263, 268–9, 288–93, 305. But it can be so *described*, and was, by Diogenes of Babylon and Antipater at least.

⁴⁵ This does indeed presuppose that there is only one correct course of action in the given circumstances. We will return to that point below.

Or in other words, since it has just been argued that things must be present if one is to select them (160.26),⁴⁶ the point is that the sage's suicide is not a result of lack of virtue—failing to select the appropriate things when one has the opportunity to do so—but of the impossibility of selecting them when they are not present.

There are indeed other texts that say that suicide for the Stoics is determined by indifferents rather than by virtue and vice: Plutarch, *Stoic. rep.* 18 1042d (*SVF* III.759), and Cicero, *De finibus* 3.60–1 (*SVF* III.763). But the point of both of these (and also of Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2, p. 110.9 Wachsmuth = *SVF* III.758, where suicide is said to be determined by what is and is not appropriate) is that the appropriateness of suicide does not simply depend on whether one is a sage, in the sense that it would always be right for the non-sage and not right for the sage. It is in this sense that these texts say that suicide depends on indifferents, and indeed this is the same as the sense in which virtue generally depends on indifferents: not that the possession of certain of them is essential for it, but that it is rational selection among them, which may in certain circumstances include selecting what should normally be rejected—such as death.⁴⁷ The absence of certain indifferents may indeed be what makes suicide the appropriate choice in the circumstances; but this does not mean that the choice itself is not a virtuous and therefore happy one.

As an extra twist, the final objection of all (168.17–20) argues that the virtuous person will not be happy if suicide is appropriate but he is prevented from it. This however misses the point that, for the Stoics, happiness lies in trying to do the appropriate thing as far as one is able, and not in whether one succeeds.

5. *Appropriate action and preferred indifferents*

A similar misunderstanding of the relation between appropriate action and preferred indifferents underlies another criticism, found not only in our collection but also in Alexander's *Topics* commentary, and used against the Stoics in Cicero, *De Finibus* 4.⁴⁸ The Stoics are presented with the dilemma: confronted with the choice between virtue alone, or virtue plus a 'preferred indifferent' such as health or wealth, will the sage select the former or the latter? And when they answer that he will select virtue plus health rather than virtue alone, the critic responds, in effect, that in that case health must have some value. That value could in principle be instrumental – health contributes to the practice of virtue, as in (2) above; it could also be that of health as a constituent of the (non-Stoic) end in itself, as in (1).

⁴⁶ Above, n. 18.

⁴⁷ Compare the contrast at Diogenes Laertius 7.109 = LS 59E between actions appropriate only in particular circumstances and those appropriate generally: Sharples (1996) 143 n. 16. – Thus, in saying that Stoic suicide was *not* on account of *inability* to select preferred indifferents, the objection unknowingly comes close to the true position: suicide is rational when it *is* the appropriate choice among indifferents, when in other words to select life rather than death would be, not indeed impossible, but wrong.

⁴⁸ Cicero, *De finibus* 4.59; Alexander, *In top.* 211.9–14 = *SVF* III.62 (cf. Irwin (1998) 173).

In the version of the argument we find in the *mantissa*, though not explicitly in that in Alexander's *Topics* commentary, the claim is that the sage will select preferred indifferents along with virtue because he has some need for them. The word for 'need' is $\chi\rho\epsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha$; as Rist pointed out, this can also mean 'use', and in fact that health has some *use*, rather than that it is *necessary*, is all that the argument from the selection of virtue plus health, rather than virtue, could establish, unless we are to suppose that everything it is reasonable to select when we can is something that we would suffer from the lack of. However, the author of the *mantissa* objection has, in introducing the argument, stated that the virtuous person, in his own view, *needs* health, strength, prosperity, and many other things (163.2), before going on to say that 'this is so also according to those according to whom virtue is supposed to be self-sufficient for happiness'. So we may, as Rist suggested, be dealing with a deliberate or unconscious exploitation of ambiguity in the term $\chi\rho\epsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha$.⁴⁹

The question of use or need, however, is not the main issue in these passages. The issue is rather whether the dilemma is soundly stated in the first place. For it supposes that the choice between virtue or virtue plus health is one that could actually arise. And it is only a misunderstanding of the Stoic position that leads to the suggestion that it could.

In any given situation there is a selection among indifferents that is appropriate and a selection that is not. Normally it will be appropriate to select preferred indifferents and reject dispreferred ones, to select health rather than sickness; but not always. As Chrysippus himself said, 'if I knew that it was fated for me to be ill now, I would eagerly seek that; for the foot too, if it had intelligence, would eagerly seek to be covered with mud'.⁵⁰

But virtuous action is appropriate action, or appropriate selection among indifferents, with the additional proviso that it is on the basis of a settled disposition and for the right reason. So in any specific set of circumstances, either it is appropriate to select health, or else it is not. In the first case the person who rejects health is not choosing virtue rather than virtue plus health; he is not making the appropriate selection, and so cannot even claim to be virtuous. And if on the other hand the circumstances are such that it is not appropriate to select health, the person who does so is not choosing virtue plus health rather than virtue; he is choosing health rather than virtue. The dilemma from which the argument starts, in other words, is one that cannot ever arise in any actual set of circumstances. And that raises the question whether the position our text attributes to the Stoics is one that they ever actually held. Cicero, we may note, does not present the Stoics *themselves* as saying that the sage will choose virtue plus wealth; but he has earlier attributed to them the view that the sage will choose virtue plus an oil-flask rather than virtue alone, though

⁴⁹ Cf. Rist (1969) 9, suggesting that use of the term $\chi\rho\epsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha$ by the Stoics was misinterpreted by their opponents. Kidd (1955) points out that in the present passage $\chi\rho\epsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha$ may be supplied by the critic rather than being evidence for the Stoics' own use of the term. Cf. also Edelstein and Kidd (1989) 640.

⁵⁰ Epictetus *Diss.* 2.6.9f. (= LS 58J).

coupled, we may note, with the insistence that the oil-flask will not make the sage any more *happy*.⁵¹

True, this analysis presupposes that in any given situation one choice is appropriate and the other not. May there not sometimes, even often, be more than one appropriate choice? Presumably the answer is yes; though Susanne Bobzien has recently observed that ‘sages ... will have usually only one option they can take. For there is generally only one morally right choice, whereas there are many ways in which one can go wrong.’⁵² But, if there are two choices which are equally appropriate, it is a matter of complete indifference which one adopts. And, if it is a matter of complete indifference, why should the Stoics feel obliged to answer the question which way the sage, *qua* sage, will choose? Or, putting the point another way, if common sense suggests that the sage will in a given situation select rather than reject something which has no moral significance at all, like an oil-flask, on some other grounds which have nothing to do with virtue, how is it legitimate to infer from this that the indifferent thing is necessary for the sage’s happiness? It is so only if one assumes that virtuous behaviour alone is not sufficient for happiness, but other things matter too; but then the critics are assuming the anti-Stoic position they set out to prove.

The Stoic position as here interpreted does have the following harsh consequence.⁵³ Suppose we have a situation where a ‘good deed’ – in the ordinary, rather than the Stoic, sense of the term – can be performed in either of two ways. For example, one can rescue a drowning man either by jumping into a raging river oneself and risking one’s own life, or by noticing that there is a lifebelt nearby and throwing it to the man; and, let us suppose, there is no reason to think that either method has a greater chance of success than the other.⁵⁴ Does it then follow that the person who does a ‘good deed’, as commonly so regarded, at unnecessary risk to his own life, either through failing to notice that there is a safer way to achieve the same end or through a misguided desire to act ‘heroically’, does not perform a good deed in the Stoic sense of the term, through not making the appropriate selection? The answer must be, yes, that does follow; or more precisely, saving the drowning man was an appropriate action, but risking one’s life is one of those actions which are only appropriate in special circumstances,⁵⁵ and the circumstances in this case did not meet the criterion. Consequently it does indeed follow that the person who risks his life to save another, but unnecessarily, is not virtuous. But who ever suggested that the Stoic notion of virtue was a broad or flexible one? And if we are tempted to say that his action was virtuous, though less virtuous

⁵¹ Cicero, *De finibus* 4.30. I am grateful to Inna Kupreeva for drawing my attention to the latter passage, and to the students with whom I have discussed this issue.

⁵² Bobzien (1998) 341.

⁵³ This point arose in discussion with Inna Kupreeva.

⁵⁴ Whether either of them will actually succeed is up to fate and providence, but that is beside the point; in the absence of a suitably relevant oracle the Stoic sage just has to judge the probabilities in the same way as anyone else, though in the case of a sage we are talking not so much about hesitant deliberation beforehand as about possible justification of the action afterwards.

⁵⁵ Above, n. 47.

than that of the person who chose to try to save the drowning man in an equally effective but less risky way, we should remember that Stoicism does not allow degrees of virtue.

6. *The alleged illogicality of denying value to indifferents*

Other arguments in our collection simply suppose that what is selected must itself have value for happiness.

Moreover, if according to these people virtue rejects and avoids some indifferent things, but chooses and selects others, it will not be self-sufficient for happiness. For how can the person be happy who is in those [circumstances] that virtue rejects? For either it will not do well in rejecting these, or else it is not possible to be happy in the presence of those things that it is the task of virtue to reject. (161.23–5)

Similarly at 167.13–17: preferred indifferents must be preferred with a view to happiness, and therefore contribute to happiness, so that virtue will not be sufficient for happiness. The text then goes on to ask whether the life according to nature is good or a preferred indifferent. The Stoic answer would be that life according to nature, as they understand it, is indeed a good – for it is virtue – but that does not mean that preferred indifferents are necessary for it; what matters is selecting, not achieving.

Objection XXXIV (167.9–13) asserts against the Stoics that doing well in unfavourable circumstances does not produce happiness. To this the Stoic answer would be that happiness lies in your own virtue, i.e. in attempting as far as is in your power to reject what is to be rejected; that you may fail in this, due to circumstances beyond your control, does not diminish your happiness.

Underlying these objections is the assumption, also found in other critics of the Stoics in antiquity, that the Stoic view of what ultimately matters is simply absurd. This is made clear in argument (XX) at 164.7–9:

for if the possession of the things that are selected is indifferent and does not contribute to the end, the selection will be empty and vain.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Striker (1996) 313 has suggested that this reflects an argument going back to Carneades. Cf. also argument XXIX (165.29–32): ‘Moreover, if the things in accordance with nature are objects of appetite for the wise man, and the wise man has appetite for nothing in vain, these things, for which he has appetite, will be referred to his own proper end and will contribute something to his happiness.’ The primary MS treats 162.32–164.9 and 164.9–21 as a single argument, perhaps because the latter is not introduced by ‘Moreover’; they are indeed both concerned with the theme of use. The accumulation of rhetorical questions in 163.32–164.9 is notable, though rhetorical questions are found elsewhere in *mantissa* 20: one may also note the rhetorical tricolon at 164.1–2. It is however doubtful whether we can infer from this stylistic feature anything concerning the origin of individual arguments.

Argument (XX) is reminiscent of similar complaints against the Stoics by Plutarch,⁵⁷ but with the difference that it makes, as Plutarch does not do in these passages, specific reference to the *use* of the selected indifferents as the materials of virtue. One might also compare Cicero, *De finibus* 4.46, where it is implied that making the ultimate end consist in choice contradicts the notion of an ultimate end, and Plutarch, *Comm. not.* 1072c, where it is wrongly argued that the Stoic position is circular, defining reasonable choice and the end in terms of each other.⁵⁸ These points appear to go beyond what is explicitly asserted in argument (XX), or anywhere else in *mantissa* 20; at least, they do so unless we press ‘empty and vain’ in the passage just quoted to mean ‘logically absurd’ or ‘lacking any definition’, rather than simply ‘pointless’. But the latter is I think the natural way to take the words in their context, and in that case a line of argument which is present in sources influenced by the Academics is absent from *mantissa* 20 – perhaps significantly.

7. Human nature and moral development

Argument (XIV) at 162.3–16 makes a similar point to Cicero in *De finibus* 4.25–6,⁵⁹ that the Stoic account of human happiness simply disregards human nature. Cicero emphasises the alleged incompatibility between the Stoic account of moral development through οἰκειώσις and the Stoic account of the ultimate end; and we find οἰκειώσις being appealed to in the same way in *mantissa* 20:

Moreover, virtue wants to possess in a good condition *the things for which human beings have a natural affinity*, and does not wish to possess them not in a good condition; and [a human being] has a natural affinity not only to himself and his parts and faculties and perfections, but also to those around him, parents, friends, relations, fellow-citizens; for [a human being] is a communal and political creature. [So] it is clear that if these things are in good condition and are preserved they make some contribution to his own proper good and all the things that he needs to be able to preserve both himself and each of those for whom he has a natural affinity. So there is also need of the beneficial goods, which can either produce the things that are to be chosen on their own account for a human being – these are those for which he has a natural affinity – or preserve them or ward off their opposites. (162.16–26)

Moreover, if happiness is fullness of good things and each of *the things for which we have a natural affinity* is some good, how is there not need of all of these for

⁵⁷ Plutarch, *Comm. not.* 22 1069c, 23 1070a, 27 1072d.

⁵⁸ Cf. Striker (1996) 303–4.

⁵⁹ Cf. also Cicero, *De finibus* 4.47–8. Striker (1996) 293, notes that this accurately states the Stoic position, however absurd Cicero may find it.

fullness of good things? For to say that we have a natural affinity for a plurality of things, but that it makes no difference to us how they are, is to say things that are inconsistent. If we need them, how could anyone be said to be happy in the absence of these things that he needs, if happiness is something without lack and complete? (162.26–32)⁶⁰

The division at the end of the first of these passages of natural goods into those that are productive and those that are preservative is noteworthy; productive and preservative goods are the fourth group (the first three being goods deserving honour, goods deserving praise, and ‘potencies’ such as wealth) in a classification that occurs in the *Magna Moralia*, where health for example is in the third group, exercise in the fourth.⁶¹ The same classification also occurs in the summary of Peripatetic ethics attributed to Arius Didymus,⁶² in Alexander’s *Topics* commentary, where it is referred to Aristotle’s ‘division of goods’,⁶³ and in Aspasius’ commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*.⁶⁴ The Alexander *Topics* commentary refers in the fourth class only to goods that ‘produce and contribute to’ the third class; unlike our text and the *Magna Moralia*, it does not explicitly mention *preserving*. On the other hand both the *Topics* commentary and Aspasius, unlike the *Magna Moralia* but like our *mantissa* text, identify the fourth class as ‘beneficial’, ὠφέλιμα.⁶⁵ What is unique to our text is the reference to not only producing and preserving but also warding off opposites; the word used, ἀλεξήτικα, is apparently a ἄπαξ λεγόμενον.⁶⁶

Argument (XIX) seems to suggest that bodily and external goods contribute to our moral development:

Moreover, nature does nothing in vain; for neither does any other craft do any of the things brought about by it in vain, but each of the things brought about by a craft contributes to the proper end of [the craft]; and nature is a sort of divine craft, so that the things brought about by it, too, will contribute to the proper end of that in which they come about. And both bodily and external goods will *give*

⁶⁰ Striker (1996) 269 (cf. 295), notes against Cicero in the sequel to *De finibus* 4.25–6, cited above, that the Stoics do not in fact neglect these things, in so far as they are matters for appropriate action. But that will not provide an answer to the critics in the present context, concerned with the sufficiency of virtue for happiness; for it simply invites the retort in sec. 6 above: ‘if you do not neglect these things, must it not be because they themselves’—as opposed to simply acting rightly concerning them—are necessary for your happiness?’

⁶¹ [Aristotle], *Magna moralia* 1.2 1183b19ff.

⁶² *Ap. Stobaeus, Ecl.* 2.7.19, p. 134.20–135.1 Wachsmuth; cf. above, n. 15, and Sharples (1983) 143–5.

⁶³ Alexander, *In top.* 242.4–8 = Aristotle fr.113 Rose³. Cf. Sharples (1983) loc. cit.

⁶⁴ Aspasius, *In EN* 32.10–18.

⁶⁵ Aspasius does say ‘in the particular sense’ (ἰδίως), allowing that other goods are beneficial too. Aspasius does not explicitly mention either producing or preserving, and identifies the fourth group as goods that are chosen only for something else and never for their own sake, for example medical treatments involving cutting and burning.

⁶⁶ No other occurrences are included in the index to TLG CD-ROM E.

us a natural affinity for this, and so these too contribute to the end that is natural for us, and our affinity to them is not in vain. So virtue is not self-sufficient for the end for a human being in accordance with nature, if it is self-sufficient neither for the acquisition nor for the preservation of the things for which we have a natural affinity. (163.24–32)

It will suggest this, at least, if the ‘contribution’ referred to consists in ‘giving us an affinity’ to the end.⁶⁷ But from the Stoic point of view it is not clear why this should be thought to imply that bodily and external goods are still necessary once virtue has been achieved and their status as indifferents recognised.

8. Conclusion

The last two groups of objections, those turning on the implausibility of attaching importance to the selection of things that have no value (§6 above) and those turning on the appeal to human nature (§7), seem different in kind from those considered earlier. For it does not seem possible for the Stoics to defend themselves against these by arguing that their position has been misinterpreted; it is now rather a matter of objections to the Stoic position itself. To discuss those further would exceed the bounds of the present paper, and they are no longer issues of a kind that can be resolved by clarifying the position of one side or the other. The Stoic position may indeed seem more plausible if one asks: is it goods of the soul – i.e. virtue in its various aspects – that are valuable, or bodily and external goods? (Peripatetics and followers of Antiochus of Ascalon will respond that this is a false alternative.) Or, putting it another way; if one says with Cicero, *Republic* 6.26, *mens cuiusque is est quisque*, is one not led to value goods of the soul alone?⁶⁸

It seems that the Stoics claimed that virtue is sufficient for happiness because, seeing happiness as the ultimate human goal, they considered that it was only by claiming that virtue is sufficient to achieve this that they would be able to establish moral values as the supreme ones. One might object that they could have achieved the same end just by claiming – as Antiochus was to do – that virtue far outweighs everything else⁶⁹ (though Antiochus too regarded virtue as sufficient for the *happy* life, while not, in his view, for the *happiest*). But as soon as one allows that the sage’s circumstances can reduce his happiness in spite of his virtue, all the normal assumptions that people have

⁶⁷ οἰκείωσιν is here used with the things to which we develop an οἰκείωσις as the grammatical subject; it does not seem to be used in this way anywhere in *SVF*, where, when the verb is used in the active, it is usually nature that is the subject. Nature may indeed in such cases, as Malcolm Schofield has pointed out to me, be using bodily and external goods as its instruments. But on the purely verbal level at least our author takes over Stoic terminology but does not use it in the customary Stoic way.

⁶⁸ I am grateful to Michael Reeve for drawing my attention to this passage.

⁶⁹ Cf. Striker (1996) 276.

about external goods come into play, and the claim that, in the case of the person who is wealthy and successful, but lacks the virtue of temperance, his lack of temperance counts more against his happiness than his wealth counts for it begins to look less convincing. Something like this thought may lie behind Cicero's criticisms of Theophrastus for making virtue too weak by allowing external factors to count against happiness.⁷⁰ But, even if the Stoics are in the end guilty of preferring the rhetorical effect of paradoxical exaggeration rather than adherence to philosophical plausibility, and even if some of the objections raised against them, those considered at the end of this paper, have some force, that does not alter the fact that many of the criticisms we dealt with earlier misconstrue the Stoic position and consequently miss their mark.

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⁷⁰ Cicero, *Academica* 1.33–5, *De finibus* 5.12, *Tusc. disp.* 5.85 (Theophrastus, 497–9 FHS&G). One may also compare Julia Annas' observation that, if virtue cannot make you happy without external goods, but wickedness can make you unhappy in spite of them, wickedness seems to be more powerful than virtue: Annas (1999) 85.

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