
THE BLACK BOX IN STOIC AXIOLOGY

BY

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Abstract: The ‘black box’ in Stoic axiology refers to the mysterious connection between the input of Stoic deliberation (reasons generated by the value of indifferents) and the output (appropriate actions). In this paper, I peer into the black box by drawing an analogy between Stoic and Kantian axiology. The value and disvalue of indifferents is intrinsic, but *conditional*. An extrinsic condition on the value of a token indifferent is that one’s selection of that indifferent is sanctioned by context-relative ethical principles. The value of an indifferent that does not meet this condition is normatively silenced, such that it fails to constitute a reason for action.

1. Introduction

The Stoics maintained that virtue is the *only* good thing. Nothing else – not even health or wealth or freedom from pain – is good. So you are no better off if you are healthy rather than sick, financially secure rather than destitute, or unperturbed rather than on the rack. One might wonder, then, whether Stoicism can provide any guidance at all for practical decision-making, especially because most of our decisions are of the mundane sort. ‘Should I have chips or salad?’ ‘Should I walk my dog or read more Plato?’ ‘Should I attend that lecture or visit my friend instead?’ The Stoics’ grand view of virtue as the sole good just does not seem to speak to the demands of our ordinary practical lives. But appearances are misleading. The Stoics were firmly committed to the view that we should look to nature as a guide in our practical deliberations. This is why the Stoics introduced axiological distinctions among ‘indifferents’, such that natural things like health and wealth were said to possess ‘value’ (*axia*/aestimatio), while unnatural things like illness and poverty were said to possess ‘disvalue’ (*apaxia*/

inaestimabile). The very *task* of Stoic practical wisdom is to make the right sorts of discriminations among indifferents based on a reckoning of their natural value (Cic. *Fin.* 3.50 = SVF 1.365 = LS 58I).¹

It is clear, on this picture, why the Stoics thought that maintaining one's health or pursuing financial gain is generally the thing to do. But the theory does not seem well equipped to explain why sometimes the right thing to do is to destroy one's own property or to sacrifice life and limb for one's country. How could it have been rational for the Roman general Regulus² to select death and torture at the hands of the Carthaginians instead of health, family, and tranquility? The former are paradigmatically *dis*-valuable indifferents. How is it that intrinsically valuable or disvaluable indifferents fail to provide reasons for action in some cases, but constitute reasons for action in others? And more generally, how is the theoretical apparatus of 'value' and 'disvalue' supposed to guide a Stoic in her practical deliberations at all? I think the Stoics have answers to these questions which have so far gone unappreciated.

My plan is as follows. In Section 2, I outline the Stoic ethical commitments that generate what I call the 'black box' in Stoic axiology, or the mysterious relationship between the input and output of Stoic practical reasoning. In Section 3, I consider two tempting but inadequate strategies for resolving the puzzle which illuminate the sort of solution required. In Section 4, I argue that the natural values strategy, which enjoys favor among many scholars, fails to respect a central datum that generates the puzzle it purports to solve. In Section 5, I advance my novel proposal according to which the value of indifferents is intrinsic, but conditional. In particular, the value of indifferents is subject to an extrinsic condition, namely, that one's selection of that indifferent is sanctioned by context-relative ethical principles.³ The value of indifferents that do not meet this condition is *normatively silenced*.⁴ In Section 6, I provide concrete examples of Stoic ethical principles in action in various deliberative contexts. I conclude by recapping and drawing two lessons for our understanding of the history of ethics.

2. *Stoic ethical theory*

On one construal, an ethical theory is eudaimonist if it maintains that happiness is the final object of human desire and the ultimate justification of all rational action.⁵ Like any other eudaimonist ethical theory, Stoicism had its own substantive conception of the goal (*telos*/*finis*) of human life, or happiness. Over the centuries leaders of the Stoic school provided a range of different formulations of the end (Stob. *Ecl.* 2.75–76; D.L. 7.87–88). The doctrinal core uniting all of them is the view that one's ultimate good is to live in agreement with nature (*phusis*/*natura*), both one's own individual nature and the rational and providentially ordered cosmic nature of which we

are a part. Living in accordance with nature consists in living in accordance with virtue. The Stoics thought that virtue is wholly constitutive of happiness, such that happiness depends solely on one's possession and exercise of virtue. The identification of virtue with happiness does not on its face have clear practical import. As I articulate below, however, Stoic virtue consists in the perfectly reliable disposition to make the right sorts of selections among indifferents; and one's selections of indifferents are correct insofar as they respond to the reasons generated by the value of indifferents.

Moreover, when used to describe *actions*, 'virtue' picks out the intensional and adverbial aspect of an action (Kerferd 1978, pp. 134–135). Calling an action virtuous is just another way of saying that some action issued from a virtuous disposition. So if you wanted to know *what* someone did, saying they did the virtuous thing would be as uninformative as saying they did what they did well. At most this tells you that someone acted *prudently* or *wisely*, but it does not give you an extensional specification of the action. Herein lies the difference between the 'perfectly right action' (*katorthōma*/recte factum or officium perfectum) of the sage and the merely 'appropriate action' (*kathēkon*/officium) shared by sages and fools. Perfectly right actions, to borrow Kerferd's idiom, specify the intensional or adverbial aspect of any given action (the 'how'), which supervenes upon an action (the 'what', or extensional aspect).⁶ What is characteristic of the sage is not that she ϕ 's in circumstances C when ϕ -ing is the right thing to do, but rather that she *virtuously* ϕ 's (S.E. M11.200–1 = SVF 3.516 = LS 59G; refer also to S.E. M11.197–199 and Cic. *Fin.* 3.59 = SVF 3.498 = LS 59F). And it is not characteristic of the fool that he ψ 's when ψ -ing is the wrong thing to do, but rather that he ψ 's *unvirtuously*.⁷ This point has profound implications for our understanding of Stoic practical reasoning. For if it's the case that the fool can and does perform the right action often enough, it cannot be the case that virtue is necessary to guide the fool in his deliberations about what to do. The sage often does the same thing as her foolish counterpart, but she does so with godlike understanding and reliability, or on the basis of practical wisdom.⁸ On the Stoic view, attaining virtue serves only to *reinforce* the behaviors already within the ken of the advanced moral progressor.⁹ This is why sages would be hard to discern, if there were any among us.¹⁰

Every action involves a discrimination or choice of indifferents.¹¹ This is what the Stoics called a *selection* (*eklogē*/selectio) (and the same, mutatis mutandis, for 'dissection'). In any given situation there is a single *correct* selection of indifferents. The central question that the Stoic theory of practical reasoning must address is, 'how does one go about making the correct selection?' On this topic, the Stoics believed that there are defeasible guidelines built into the fabric of nature, originating with our neo-natal pursuit and avoidance behaviors. They encapsulated this idea in the formula that 'all things in accordance with nature (*kata phusin*/secundum naturam) are to-be-taken (*lēpta*/sumenda), and all things contrary to nature

(*para phusin/contra naturam*) are not-to-be-taken (*alēpta*)’ (Stob. *Ecl.* 2.82 = SVF 3.142 = LS 58C; trans. Long & Sedley unless otherwise noted; refer also to Cic. *Ac.* 1.36-7 = SVF 1.191 & 1.193). Naturalness and unnaturalness provide a metric for non-moral *value* (*axia/aestimatio*), that is, the value of things other than virtue and vice: ‘all things in accordance with nature have value and all things contrary to nature have disvalue.’ (Stob. *Ecl.* 2.83 = SVF 3.124 = LS 58D). And finally, the Stoics make the following division of indifferents *qua* bearers of value or disvalue: ‘some valuable things have much value and others little... Those which have much value are called “preferred” [alternatively: promoted] (*proēgmena/praeposita*), and those which have much disvalue “dispreferred” [alternatively: “demoted”] (*apoproēgmena/reiecta*)’ (Stob. *Ecl.* 2.84 = SVF 3.128 = LS 58E). In a more contemporary idiom, the selective value (*axia eklektikē*) of indifferents provides pro tanto reasons for action, such that preferred or promoted indifferents are, all things equal, the proper objects of selection.

Orthodox Stoic axiology is importantly distinct from the axiology of the heterodox Stoic Aristo of Chios, who denied that anything other than virtue and vice has intrinsic and non-derivative worth (Cic. *Fin.* 4.43 = SVF 1.369; D.L. 7.160 = SVF 1.351 = LS 58G). It is also importantly distinct from a familiar Socratic or Platonic position, according to which things other than virtue and vice in themselves possess no value (*oudenos axia*), but they *become* good or bad in virtue of their good or bad *use* (Plato, *Euthydemus* 281d-e; refer also to *Meno* 87c–89a and *Apology* 30a-b).¹² On the Socratic or Platonic view, the goodness and badness of things like health and wealth or sickness and poverty is extrinsic, derivative, and conferred. But this is emphatically not what the Stoics maintained. On the Stoic view, the selective *value* of indifferents is categorically distinct from the *goodness* of virtue. Indifferents never become good for the Stoic, even when they are used well. Selective value is exhausted by its role in providing guidance about how to live in conformity with nature, and so its value is prospective only.¹³ In other words, the value of indifferents is a source of practical reasons or reasons for acting, even though their attainment or possession makes no difference to our happiness. Indifferents are also *in themselves* bearers of value and disvalue, such that their value is intrinsic and in no way conferred by a certain kind of use.¹⁴

Included among the promoted/preferred indifferents are ‘life, health, pleasure, beauty, strength, wealth, reputation, noble birth,’ and among the demoted/dispreferred indifferents are ‘death, disease, pain, ugliness, weakness, poverty, low repute, ignoble birth and the like’ (D.L. 7.106 = SVF 3.127; trans. Hicks). And while the Stoics are committed to the view that whatever transpires is natural in the sense that it is the unfolding of Nature’s providential plan, they nonetheless sought to provide deliberative guidance to finite agents who are trying to live in conformity with nature. We can see how this axiology gives the Stoic identification of virtue and happiness

its practical content. The perfectly reliable disposition to make selections on the basis of the value of indifferents is constitutive of virtue, which is in turn constitutive of happiness. This is captured nicely by Cato's summary of the various formulations of the Stoic goal of life: 'the supreme good is to live applying one's knowledge of the natural order, selecting what accords with nature, and rejecting what is contrary. This is what it is to live consistently and harmoniously with nature' (Cic. *Fin.* 3.31 = SVF 3.15 = LS 64A; trans. Woolf unless otherwise noted).¹⁵

The most important upshot for our purposes is that Stoic axiology is intended to provide a 'principle of appropriate action' (*principium officii*) or a 'principle for acting' (*principium agendi*) (Cic. *Fin.* 2.43, 3.50, 3.60, 4.43, 4.46–48, 4.68; Cic. *Off.* 1.6). In other words, axiological distinctions among indifferents provide a rational basis for one's selections of indifferents, without which virtue has no work or function. This is why indifferents are called the *material* of virtue (*hulē tēs aretēs*/materia sapientiae), and virtue the skill of using that material well (Plut. *Comm. not.* 1069e = SVF 3.491 = LS 59A). Of particular importance to understanding the puzzle at hand is the strength of the Stoic thesis. The Stoics maintained that indifferents are the *sole* sources of practical reasons, such that 'all our deliberations (cogitationes) are said to be directed at them' (Cic. *Fin.* 3.60 = SVF 3.763 = LS 66G).¹⁶ In a well-known passage on the Stoic doctrine of rational suicide, Cato says that 'the whole rationale (ratio omnis) for either remaining in or departing from life is to be measured by reference to those intermediates...' (Cic. *Fin.* 3.61 = SVF 3.763 = LS 66G). The 'intermediates' to which he is referring are canonical indifferents like health and wealth, and 'rationale' is a clear reference to the Stoic's definition of appropriate action as that which, when done, admits of a 'well-reasoned defense' (*eulogos apologia*/ratio probabilis) (D.L. 7.107 = SVF 3.493; Stob. *Ecl.* 2.85 = SVF 3.494 = LS 59B; Cic. *Fin.* 3.58 = SVF 3.498 = LS 59F, Vol. 2). Cato claims that the reasons invoked in such a defense are *measured* by indifferents – or, in a more contemporary idiom, an agent's normative reasons are *exhausted* by indifferents as such.¹⁷ In other words, all normative reasons have their source in indifferents as such, that is, as bearers of value and disvalue.¹⁸

3. The black box

The correct selection in any given situation constitutes the appropriate action (*kathēkon*/officium). Barring exceptional circumstances, appropriate actions include 'honouring our parents, brothers [and] fatherland', 'returning a deposit', 'requiting gratitude'; and typical proscribed actions include 'betraying one's country, assaulting one's parents, robbing temples', harming another absent an injustice, taking from another in order to increase one's advantage (D.L. 7.108; Cic. *Fin.* 3.32; *Fin.* 3.59; Cic. *Off.*

1.20; *Off.* 1.47). For obvious reasons, performing an appropriate action will often involve selecting disvaluable or demoted indifferents, for example, in cases where dying for one's country is the right thing to do, and doing the wrong thing will often involve selecting valuable or promoted indifferents. And in unusual cases, when subject to extreme circumstances, the correct selection was often thought to involve maiming oneself or killing oneself.¹⁹ That is, the status of indifferents like health as valuable is fixed, but not in all cases did the Stoics think they were the right thing to select.

The black box falls immediately out of the conjunction of the Stoic commitments enumerated earlier: if indifferents are the sole sources of reasons for action, how could a Stoic ever rationally judge that, for example, 'death' is the appropriate thing to select? How is it that one should 'welcome death, or even summon it if circumstances so indicate' – as one must to achieve a smooth flow of life in accordance with Nature's dynamic plan? (*Sen. Ep.* 69.6).²⁰ Another way to think about the puzzle is this: Why is there token variability in the appropriateness of actions – the appropriateness of ϕ -ing changes across contexts – but apparently no token variability in the axiological status of indifferents that are meant to guide one to that determination?²¹ We need an account that explains how the apparatus of 'selective value' is equipped to guide a Stoic reliably to discerning the right course of action, especially in cases where one is required to select disvaluable indifferents. The puzzle thus articulated, and the Stoic commitments that generate it, have been a subject of debate since Rachel Barney's 2003 paper, 'A Puzzle in Stoic Ethics'. In the remainder of this section, I outline and reject two strategies for resolving the puzzle, loosely based on Barney's own exposition of the puzzle. I refer to the two tacks as the deontological constraints strategy and the impartial selection strategy, and will handle each in turn. Each strategy has a kernel of truth that is necessary for any adequate solution to the puzzle.

The deontological constraints strategy purportedly resolves the puzzle by imputing to the Stoics a broadly Kantian distinction between duty and inclination. On this view, Stoic practical reasoning is a two-sorted business.²² In figuring out what to do, an agent must consider (a) the moral demands (if any) that prescribe or proscribe certain actions and (b) the selective value of all the relevant indifferents. Most importantly, (a) has lexical priority over (b) such that the deliverances of (a) will always *trump* the deliverances of (b) in cases of conflict.²³ This view would explain why it is generally appropriate for an agent to pursue health and wealth, but sometimes appropriate to die for one's country or rarely if ever appropriate to benefit oneself at another's expense.

This particular formulation of the deontological constraints strategy is inadequate, since it imposes an 'anachronistic picture' regarding 'the relationship between moral and nonmoral reasons, and the thesis that moral reasons trump nonmoral ones' (Vogt, 2008, p. 198, n. 92). When a Stoic is

required to sacrifice life and limb for her country, it cannot be the case that the goodness of justice or courage *outweighs* the value of life and health. This is ruled out by the categorical distinction between goodness and value, according to which *value* is the sole input that guides a Stoic's deliberations, while virtue (the only *good*) is just the skill of deliberating well, or the perfectly reliable disposition of getting the right deliberative outputs.

We can accommodate this worry by stipulating that there are two distinct sorts of deliberative considerations – 'deontic' considerations (which speak to what is required or forbidden, *not* in terms of virtue or so-called 'moral considerations') and 'evaluative' considerations (which speak to what possesses value and disvalue).²⁴ Even so, the deontological constraints strategy mistakenly imputes a dualism between duty and inclination, which simply does not cohere with the Stoic conception of appropriate action (*kathēkon*/officium). The Stoics do not conceive of appropriate action as essentially at odds with selective value as moral duty characteristically stands against prudence on a deontological model. The core idea expressed by the notion of 'appropriate action' is something like 'suitability', and it extends to the activities of all living things. An appropriate action is 'an activity appropriate to constitutions that accord with nature', something that befits the sort of creature that one is (D.L. 7.107 = SVF 3.493 = LS 59C; trans. Long & Sedley). While Stoic appropriate action sometimes involves the sort of pain, drudgery, and self-effacement characteristic of modern conceptions of duty, it is also far more expansive than that. Appropriate action extends to the most innocuous and prudential (in the modern sense of the word) sorts of actions like cooking lentils or brushing one's teeth. While I reject the deontological constraints strategy on this basis, the view captures a necessary feature of any adequate resolution to the puzzle: that Stoic axiology is *structured* such that values are traded off in a way that ensures the right deliberative output.

If a broadly deontological solution should not be imputed to the Stoics, how about a broadly consequentialist one? What we may call the impartial selection strategy conceives of deliberation as an impartial process in which each person counts for one and no more.²⁵ Moral development, on this view, consists in the realization that *my* pursuit and avoidance of things like health and sickness are no more or less important than anyone else's, such that one should aim to maximize selective value for the greatest number. The impartial point of view fits well with the cosmopolitan tenor of our Stoic evidence. Hierocles famously provides an image of concentric circles emanating out from the individual to kin to fellow citizens, and ultimately, to the entire human race. The task, he says, is 'to draw the circles – concerning the behavior that is due to each group – together in a way, as though toward the center, and with an effort to keep transferring items out of the containing circles into the contained.' (Hierocles ap. Stob. *Anth.* 4.84.23 = LS 57G; trans. Konstan). And images of the 'universal kinship' of humans, or the organic

body of society of which each individual is a part, are ubiquitous in our sources. The Stoics are, after all, as inheritors of the legacy of Diogenes, citizens of the world!²⁶

While the impulse behind the impartial selection strategy is fundamentally correct, I think the position as formulated is not.²⁷ The impartial selection strategy resolves the puzzle at the cost of abandoning the formally egoistic character of Socratic eudaimonism.²⁸ The Stoic doctrine of ‘appropriation’ or ‘affiliation’ (*oikeiōsis*/concordatio) implies that all human behavior is grounded in an attachment to one’s own constitution (*sustasis*/constitutio) and a drive to keep one’s ruling part (*hēgemonikon*/principatus) in a natural state.²⁹ Formal egoism of this kind is entirely consistent with impartial or altruistic considerations that provide a basis for formally self-regarding selections, as my proposal later makes clear.³⁰ So while I reject the impartial selection strategy, it captures an important truth about the cosmopolitan content of deliberative considerations rooted in the social dimensions of *oikeiōsis*.

Thus far, I have rejected two strategies for resolving the puzzle, each of which contains a kernel of truth that serve as desiderata any adequate solution to the puzzle must satisfy. That brings us to one final and distinctive view that I call the natural values strategy.³¹ This strategy purports to resolve the puzzle while satisfying the desiderata just enumerated.

4. *The natural values strategy*

In a nutshell, the natural values strategy recasts the task of Stoic deliberation as determining what action is most in accordance with nature – rather than, say, determining what action maximizes the selective value of indifferents impartially or within moral side-constraints.³² According to the natural values strategy, deliberative considerations encompass not only the selective value (*axia eklektikē*) of things like health and wealth, but also considerations of justice, property rights, and role-based obligations.³³ Note that the notion of ‘accordance with nature’ is far more expansive than the selective value of indifferents. In effect, the natural values strategy expands the deliberative menu to include indifferent considerations of many different kinds. Reasons for action are generated by considerations such as the common utility of one’s city and the avoidance of harm, in addition to the selective value of things like health and wealth.³⁴ Crucially, there is also a lexical ordering among these sorts of considerations, ensuring that the promotion of the common utility always trumps the avoidance of harm, which always trumps the selective value of indifferents. This line of reasoning appears to guarantee the right sorts of actions enjoined by the Stoics, and thereby to resolve the puzzle. It explains how, for example, Regulus was able to determine that selecting death for himself was the right thing

to do, and why absent special circumstances the appropriate thing to do is to avoid harming another's welfare, or to preserve one's own health.

The natural values strategy masterfully threads the needle. On the one hand, it excludes appeal to the sort of moral considerations invoked by the deontological constraints strategy, where 'moral' here refers to a distinct and heterogeneous source of reasons foreign to the ancient eudaimonists. The natural values strategy also escapes the complaint, lodged against the modified version of the deontological constraints strategy earlier, that it has rendered the *goodness* of virtue commensurate with the *selective value* of indifferents.³⁵ On the other hand, it introduces considerations which, strictly speaking, go *beyond* the selective value of canonical indifferents such as health, wealth, and life. The lexical priority of those additional considerations ensures the right deliberative output. Brennan dubs his articulation of the view the no-shoving model, and ultimately, the naturalness-only model – 'no-shoving' captures the deontic feature of the view that regulates and constrains one's selection of indifferents with pro-social and cosmopolitan principles such as the requirements of justice and the common good (refer to *Off.* 3.42 = SVF 3.689), while 'naturalness only' captures the view's restriction of deliberative considerations to indifferent value alone.³⁶

The natural values strategy is elegant and well-motivated, but I think it faces a decisive problem. It ensures the right deliberative outputs only by ignoring the central datum motivating the puzzle with which we are concerned, namely, that indifferents of the *canonical* sort are the sole sources of reasons for action. The natural values strategy resolves the dilemma by introducing additional inputs like the common utility and the avoidance of harm that are weightier or lexically prior to indifferents like health and sickness. The problem is that these new considerations – while strictly a matter of indifference, according to the Stoic theory of value – are not properly called sources of *reasons*. On the Stoic view, the selective value (*axia eklektikê*) of valuable and disvaluable indifferents alone provides the rational basis for appropriate action (*principium officii/principium agendi*). That is to say, only canonical indifferents, or bearers of selective value and disvalue, are genuine sources of reason for action.³⁷ In this way, the natural values strategy resolves the puzzle at the expense of *trivializing* selective value by relegating it to one unimportant consideration among many.

To put the worry in a slightly different way, it is important to notice that the notion of 'accordance with nature' is used by the Stoics in at least two distinct ways. On a narrower construal, 'accord with nature' includes those things which possess value *in virtue* of their contribution to the preservation of one's natural constitution, i.e. things like health and bodily integrity, which are naturally stimulative of impulse and good candidates for the material of prospective action.³⁸ On a more expansive construal, 'accord with nature' includes those indifferents just enumerated *and* much more – for example, things that are good for others and things which cohere with

the providential plan for the world. That is, it includes indifferents *despite* the fact that many of them possess a great deal of disvalue and naturally stimulate repulsion from creatures like us.³⁹ In formulating the black box, we wondered how it could be that the reasons one has in virtue of natural value and disvalue *in the narrower sense* could reliably guide an agent to act like Regulus. So, the natural values strategy gets the right deliberative results only by abandoning what I take to be a core feature of the puzzle at hand.

5. *Conditional intrinsic value and normative silencing*

The foregoing highlights the need for a solution to the puzzle that respects the decisiveness of the weight of indifferents in the determination of appropriate action, while retaining the elements of truth contained in the deontological constraints strategy and the impartial selection strategy. My proposed solution to the puzzle centers on the Stoic commitment to the *conditionality* of the intrinsic value of indifferents.⁴⁰ The selective value and disvalue of indifferents is intrinsic to those items, but there is an *extrinsic condition* on their value. In cases where that condition is not met, those indifferents are not sources of reasons for action. In this highly circumscribed sense, the Stoic position is structurally analogous to one interpretation of Kantian ethics, according to which morality *normatively silences* prudence (Bader 2015a). In what follows, I will draw on this understanding of Kantian ethics to illuminate the Stoic view and then provide concrete examples of normative silencing at work.

On Kant's view, there are two incommensurable and fundamentally distinct kinds of value – prudence and morality – which derive ultimately from the dualism within the human person between reason and sensibility (KrV A806/B34). Although heterogeneous and incommensurable, Kant held that the kind of value corresponding to our empirical nature and its ends (happiness) is conditional on the kind of value which reigns supreme (morality) (KpV 5:111). So while things like power, wealth, and wit are genuine goods in their own right (i.e. good wholly in virtue of non-extrinsic features), their goodness does not obtain in all circumstances or in every respect, as 'the very coolness of a scoundrel' makes clear (GMS 4:394). More generally, 'happiness is good in virtue of how it itself is *on condition of being had by someone who has a good will*' (Bader 2015b, p. 185n3; emphasis mine). Importantly, the conditionality of prudential value does not imply that its value is in any way derived from or conferred by the good will – that is, its value is intrinsic, but subject to an extrinsic condition. Kant's explanation for *why* this conditionality relation exists is rooted in an axiological framework we rejected earlier as foreign to the ancients.⁴¹ Of more interest to the present question is the explanation for *how* the conditioning

relation works. It is the latter explanation – that morality *normatively silences* prudence – which I think proves instructive for the Stoic case.

As Ralf Bader has clearly demonstrated, ‘normative silencing’ is not the same as the nearby notions of ‘bracketing’ and ‘canceling’.⁴² When a reason is ‘normatively silenced’, the *metaphysical ground* of that reason is present, but an *external condition* of that ground constituting a reason is not met. When a reason is *canceled*, in contrast, there is a ‘modification of the supervenience base’ in the removal of the ground of that reason (Bader 2015a, p. 192).⁴³ The subtle distinction between the *condition* of value and the *ground* of value is crucial, as the notion of silencing requires it. And the notion fits quite well with our doxographical evidence about Stoicism, which never states that the status of health or sickness as things that are valuable and disvaluable respectively varies. Health always retains its value and sickness its disvalue, even in concrete circumstances in which they fail to generate reasons for action. What *is* subject to circumstantial variability is whether or not a condition obtains, which, when satisfied, allows the grounding relation to do its work in transmitting normative force and providing reasons for action.

So, my proposal is that there is an extrinsic condition on the value of promoted indifferents, namely, that one’s selection of that indifferent is sanctioned by high-level, context-relative ethical principles. That is:

Conditional ground of value = that x accords with nature

Extrinsic condition on value = that one’s selection of indifferent x is sanctioned by context-relative ethical principles

In my view, this axiological story is borne out by the Stoic doctrine of moral development (*oikeiōsis*/concordatio), especially the version found in Book 3 of *Fin.* (3.16–21, in particular). The Stoic account of moral development shows that as one’s constitution evolves so too does the corresponding set of appropriate actions (*kathēkonta*/officia) that accord with one’s constitution and contribute to its preservation (refer also to Sen. *Ep.* 121.15–16). The conditionality relation I am proposing is something that arrives on the scene only after one has reached the age of reason and, in the ideal case, has begun to select and dissect indifferents in a way that goes beyond narrowly prudential considerations (what Cato calls ‘cum officio selectio’ at *Fin.* 3.20).⁴⁴ The ‘natural advantages’ included in our canonical lists of valuable indifferents (all prudential-looking items, by our modern lights) have a value grounded in naturalness, but at the age of reason an agent’s normative reasons become sensitive to considerations that go beyond the selective value of natural things – even if the latter still serve as the rational and decisive basis for deliberation. Crucially, those indifferents retain their value, since there is no indication that there has been a modification to their supervenience base, and the value of those indifferents remains decisive for

the determination of appropriate action. Yet a *condition* is now imposed on that value (normatively, if not yet motivationally).

6. *Oath-keeping and integrity*

To see how conditional intrinsic value works in the context of Stoic deliberation, consider the legendary Roman exemplar, Regulus:

Marcus Atilius Regulus, as consul for the second time, was captured by ambush in Africa, when the Spartan Xanthippus was leading the Carthaginian troops... He was sent [by his captors] to the [Roman] senate, having sworn that he would return to Carthage unless certain noble captives were returned to the Carthaginians. When he reached Rome, he could see the thing that was apparently beneficial, but, as events reveal, he judged it specious. It was this: to remain in his own country, to be at home with his wife and children, to maintain his rank and standing as an ex-consul, counting the disaster that had befallen him in war as common to the fortune of warfare... What, therefore, did he do?... He himself returned to Carthage, held back by love neither for his country nor for his family and friends. Moreover, he knew well that he was going to a very cruel enemy and most sophisticated torture (Cic. *Off.* 3.99; trans. Atkins).⁴⁵

In the case of Regulus, as Cicero astutely observes, the fact that he swore an oath to the Carthaginians normatively silenced other considerations that might have otherwise provided reasons for action (*Off.* 3.111).⁴⁶ As Cicero tells us, ‘a sworn oath is a religious affirmation (*affirmatio religiosa*); and if you have promised something by affirmation with the god as witness you must hold to it (*id tenendum est*)’ (*Off.* 3.104).⁴⁷ And the relevant principles at work, he clarifies, are not self-regarding ones about avoiding the anger of the gods (*‘iram deorum’*), but principles rooted in the preservation of justice and faith (*‘iustitiam et...fidem’*).

Why think this is a case of silencing, in particular? The answer lies in Cicero’s clear demarcation between the Stoic and Peripatetic views on ethical conflict. According to Cicero, the Stoics dissolve ethical conflict by showing that one’s normative reasons uniformly support the course of action that is in fact right (*honestum*). The Peripatetics, in contrast, resolve rather than dissolve ethical conflict by maintaining that any reasons one might have to perform any action other than the virtuous one(s) are *outweighed*. In this way, the Stoics and the Peripatetics offer a different analysis of one’s normative reasons in cases of ethical conflict, even when they enjoin the same course of action in the face of it:

For whether the honourable is the only good (as is Stoics’ view) or whether what is honourable is the highest good (just as it seems to your Peripatetics) so that if everything on the other side were accumulated, it would hardly amount to the smallest weight - in either case it cannot be doubted that what is beneficial can never compete with what is honourable (Cic. *Off.* 3.11; trans. Atkins).⁴⁸

In other words, the Peripatetic analysis of the Regulus case, according to Cicero, is that Regulus had *most reason* to die for his country, although he had some reason (even if relatively trivial) to not act that way. On this view, there were *pro tanto* rather than merely *prima facie* reasons for Regulus to act differently, but those reasons were defeated by the strength of reasons rooted in oath-keeping and the good of the Republic. The Stoic analysis, in contrast, is that a condition on the value of Regulus' health and bodily integrity was not met, namely that selecting them would violate Stoic principles about oath-keeping. So, those ordinarily valuable and reason-giving indifferents failed in that instance to transmit any normative force, or to give him any reason to select them. Regulus, who was no sage, may or may not have felt a motivational pull to preserve life and limb, but this question about his psychology is distinct from the metaphysical story about his normative reasons for action. The absence of countervailing considerations in this case is evidence of normative silencing.

This axiological story applies not only to grand decisions like Regulus self-sacrifice, but also to decisions that are, broadly speaking, self-regarding. Consider an instance of a self-directed principle rooted in what we might call integrity.⁴⁹ In a well-known passage Epictetus considers the decision a slave must make about whether to hold the master's chamber pot:

Now it so happens that the rational and the irrational are different for different persons... But for determining the rational and the irrational, we employ not only our estimates of the value of external things (*tōn ekstos axiais*), but also the criterion of that which is in keeping with one's own character (*prosopōn*). For to one man it is reasonable to hold a chamber-pot for another, since he considers only that, if he does not hold it, he will get a beating and will not get food, whereas, if he does hold it, nothing harsh or painful will be done to him; but some other man feels that it is not merely unendurable to hold such a pot himself, but even to tolerate another's doing so. If you ask me, then, 'Shall I hold the pot or not?' I will tell you that to get food is of greater value (*meizona axian*) than not to get it, and to be flayed is of greater disvalue⁵⁰ (*meizona apaxian*) than not to be; so that if you measure your interests by these standards, go and hold the pot. 'Yes, but it would be unworthy of me.' That is an additional consideration, which you, and not I, must introduce into the question. For you are the one that knows yourself, how much you are worth in your own eyes and at what price you sell yourself. For different men sell themselves at different prices (Epict. *Diss.* 1.2.5–11; trans. Oldfather).

The practical upshot of Epictetus' injunction is subject to debate. Epictetus might be suggesting that everyone must decide for themselves whether the role of slave, and the activities it entails, befits them; or, he might be suggesting that no person can consent to hold the pot without objectionably degrading their own humanity.⁵¹ On either interpretation, it is evident that the Stoics maintained that principles of integrity or proper self-esteem govern the reason-giving force of indifferents like food and bodily pain. In the case where one is justifiably employing a principle of 'keeping with one's character' (*prosopōn*), indifferents like food and health

either fail to transmit any normative force because the holding of the chamber pot does not cohere with one's character, or they do transmit normative force because they do so cohere (in which case the external condition on their value has been satisfied).⁵² When speaking of a different decision-point, Epictetus chides the person who would deliberate about the value of indifferents without understanding the way in which their value is governed by integrity-based principles: 'For when a man once stoops to the consideration of such questions, I mean to estimating the value of externals, and calculates them one by one, he comes very close to those who have forgotten their own proper character' (Epict. *Diss.* 1.2.14; trans. Oldfather). In a nutshell, the weight of indifferents guides an agent to a correct determination of appropriate action only when that weight is properly assessed in terms of principles whose application and relevance are highly context dependent.⁵³

The fluidity of Stoic practical reasoning stems in part from the generality of the principles which serve as conditions on the value of indifferents. Consider Seneca's well-known formula for the derivation of duties and obligations (formula *humani officii*). Among the principles enumerated under that formula are the natural kinship of nature and mankind, the Socratic adage that it is worse to harm than to be harmed, and a general duty of beneficence (Sen. *Ep.* 95.51–53).⁵⁴ These ethical principles do not constitute a clear-cut decision procedure and do not immediately dissolve ethical conflict and ambiguity. Cicero's discussion of Regulus' oath leaves us with questions about the normative priority of Stoic principles of beneficence on the one hand and oath-keeping on the other.⁵⁵ And the plurality of individual characters entails a plurality of integrity-based injunctions that resist codification.⁵⁶ Much like Epictetus' role-based ethics or Hierocles' insistence that we play our part in the cosmic system, these principles provide guidance in one's 'search for right action' (*inventio officii/heuresis kathēkontos*) without reducing deliberation to a mindless procedure.⁵⁷ Collectively these principles are sufficiently general that they invite casuistry (well-documented in our sources) and require discernment.⁵⁸ Many are rooted in some way in Stoic physical theory, whether their providentialist worldview or their theory of cosmic interconnectedness, and others are rooted in the natural sociability of humankind, our relational standing to others, and self-respect.⁵⁹ Attending to such principles enables us to discern the particular weight of our normative reasons, and to become 'good calculators of our duties' ('boni ratiocinatores officiorum' at Cic. *Off.* 1.59). We can compare this function of ethical principles fruitfully with an interpretation of Kant's various formulations of the Categorical Imperative according to which they were not intended to provide an algorithm for right action, but to serve as a 'compass in hand' (*Compass in der Hand*) that orients the moral agent in her thinking about what morality requires (GMS 4:404).⁶⁰ It is the mark of a good practical reasoner – a sharp judge (*acrem iudicem*), as Cicero says – to

recognize which principles are contextually salient, and to determine the weight of considerations for acting one way or another.⁶¹

The conditionality of selective value entails that a deliberator must consult context-relative ethical principles to accurately assess the weight of her reasons generated by indifferents. One might for this reason object that the conditionality view is subject to the same charge I leveled against the natural values strategy earlier, namely that it trivializes the role of selective value in Stoic practical reasoning.⁶² Before explaining why I think this is not the case, it is worth noting that any solution to the puzzle must, in some way, qualify the role of selective value in Stoic practical reasoning – the incongruence between the input of Stoic practical reasoning (indifferents) and the output (appropriate actions) demands as much. Yet the nature of the qualification makes all the difference, and only the natural values strategy qualifies the role of selective value in a way that amounts to its trivialization. Rather than distinguishing *conditions* from *reasons*, the natural values strategy collapses the intricate structure of Stoic axiology into a continuum of natural value wherein the reasons generated by the selective value of canonical indifferents like health and sickness are less weighty or lexically posterior to the reasons generated by indifferent considerations like the common utility. My conditionality view, on the other hand, preserves the central datum driving the puzzle as articulated earlier: valuable and disvaluable indifferents of the canonical sort are the sole sources of reasons for action. While a Stoic must be attuned to the context-sensitive ethical principles that regulate the weight of the reasons generated by such indifferents, the weight of those indifferents alone determine the appropriateness of ϕ -ing in the circumstances. Context-sensitive ethical principles as extrinsic conditions thereby play a crucial deliberative or heuristic function, as Epictetus makes clear, but they are emphatically not reasons or parts of the specification of the reasons. In this way, my view qualifies the role of selective value in Stoic practical reasoning without trivializing it.

7. Conclusion

To recap, in this paper, I have accomplished three things. First, I articulated a black box in Stoic axiology, namely the strange fit between the input of Stoic deliberation (reasons generated by the value of indifferents) and the output (appropriate action). Second, I argued that the natural values strategy does not resolve the puzzle while remaining faithful to the textual data that generate it. Third, I offered a novel proposal for resolving the puzzle, namely, the conditionality of intrinsic value. Indifferents of the canonical sort are the sole bearers of value and disvalue (and therefore the sole sources of practical reasons), but principles serve as *conditions* which must be satisfied in order for those indifferents to be sources of reasons for

action in any given instance. My view retains the core insight of the deontological constraints strategy by introducing extrinsic conditions on value that regulate their reason-giving force; and it retains the core insight of the impartial selection strategy by invoking a plethora of cosmopolitan principles to serve as such conditions. In this way, my view provides insight into the otherwise mysterious way in which indifferent value is intended to guide deliberation.

I would like to conclude with two observations for the history of ethics. First, if correct, my account vindicates a familiar narrative about Stoic orthodoxy, according to which the fundamental disagreement between Zeno and Aristo (a 'heterodox' Stoic) centers on the intrinsic value of indifferents. Both Aristo and Zeno agreed that virtue is the only good, but they disagreed about the coherence of attributing 'selective value' to indifferents. Rather than impute to Aristo an embarrassing confusion about Zeno's position, my view implies that Aristo and Zeno had a perfectly intelligible disagreement about whether granting intrinsic value to indifferents allows for context-variance of the reasons those items generate.⁶³ Aristo thought this wasn't possible, so he denied all axiological distinctions among indifferents, thereby eliminating the deliberative and justificatory role of selective value in the Stoic scheme.⁶⁴

Second, the Stoic view that indifferents are simultaneously intrinsically valuable and subject to an extrinsic condition is nearly unparalleled in intellectual history, and an important precursor to a later manifestation of that idea in the work of Immanuel Kant. My view implies that the Stoic theory of value is in some respects analogous to the Kantian theory of value, but in a way that respects the Stoics' commitment to the prudential nature of value and our normative reasons. Kantian arguments for the absolute priority of the moral over the prudential rely on premises utterly foreign to the Stoics, who secured a similar axiological picture on the basis of their commitment to eudaimonism, providentialism, and the sovereignty of virtue.⁶⁵

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NOTES

¹ See also D.L. 7.88; Stob. *Ecl.* 2.82. Henceforth, Cic. *Ac.* = Cicero, *Academica* (*On Academic Skepticism*); Cic. *Off.* = Cicero, *De Officiis* (*On Duties*); Cic. *Fin.* = Cicero, *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum* (*On Moral Ends*); D.L. = Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum* (*Lives of the Philosophers*); Epict. *Diss.* = Epictetus, *Dissertationes* (*Discourses*); GMS = Immanuel Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (*Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*);

KrV = Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft (Critique of Pure Reason)*; KpV = Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft (Critique of Practical Reason)*; LS = A.A. Long and D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1987 & 1989); Plut. *Comm. not.* = Plutarch, *De communibus notitiis adversus Stoicos (Against the Stoics on Common Notions)*; Plut. *Stoic. repugn.* = Plutarch, *De Stoicorum repugnantiiis (On the Contradictions of the Stoics)*; S.E. M11 = Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos XI (Against the Ethicists)*; Sen. *Ep.* = Seneca, *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium (Letters on Ethics)*; Stob. *Anth.* = Stobaeus, *Anthologium (Anthology)*; Stob. *Ecl.* = Stobaeus, *Eclogae (Eclogues)*; keyed to Wachsmuth's edition); SVF = H. von Arnim, *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, 3 vols. (Leipzig, 1903–5).

² Marcus Atilius Regulus was a Roman consul during the First Punic War, and is the subject of Stoicizing valorization by Cicero in *Off.*

³ To borrow a helpful idiom from Ralf Bader (2016), the Stoics make a principled distinction between the source or ground of a reason and the conditions of a reason.

⁴ Henceforth I will mention only the positive 'value' (*axia*), with an implicit *mutatis mutandis* clause for 'disvalue' (*apaxia*).

⁵ This is what Vlastos called the 'eudaimonist axiom' (Vlastos 1991, p. 203).

⁶ Every list of *katorthōmata* (e.g. Stob. *Ecl.* 2.96–97 = SVF 3.501 & 3.502) shows that virtuous action can only be generally captured in adverbial terms.

⁷ Of course, sometimes the fool simply performs the wrong action or omits to perform the appropriate one (Stob. *Ecl.* 2.93 = SVF 3.500).

⁸ In a Chrysippean fragment (SVF 3.510 = LS 59I) it is said that 'the man who progresses to the furthest point performs all proper functions [*kathēkonta*/official] without exception and omits none... is not yet happy, but happiness supervenes on it when these intermediate actions acquire the additional properties of firmness and tenor and their own particular fixity' (trans. Long & Sedley).

⁹ Refer to Barney (2003, p. 319) and Brennan (2005, p. 202 n32). What is transformed upon attaining virtue is one's evaluative and psychological outlook, i.e. one learns that virtue really is the only good (Cic. *Fin.* 3.21).

¹⁰ As is implied at Sen. *Ep.* 14.14, for example. On the rarity of the sage, refer to Vazquez (2021, pp. 438–442).

¹¹ This is what Barney dubbed the 'exhaustiveness of selection' (2003, p. 314).

¹² In a word, the Socratic view is that 'right use' makes non-moral goods good, whereas the Stoic view is that 'right use' is the only good.

¹³ Refer to Brennan (2000, p. 176 n41).

¹⁴ Seneca, for example, says that indifferents 'have a certain amount of value in themselves' (*De Brevitate Vitae* 22.4).

¹⁵ Cato is the Stoic spokesperson in Cicero's dialogue.

¹⁶ For additional textual evidence for this thesis, refer to Cic. *Fin.* 3.61, Plut. *Stoic. repugn.* 1042d, and Plut. *Comm. not.* 1064c.

¹⁷ The Stoic position is that appropriate actions are 'measured' (*parametreisthai*/metiri) by the selective value of canonical indifferents. For an instance of the Greek, refer to Stob. 2.86 = SVF 3.499. For an instance of the Latin, refer to *Fin.* 3.61 = SVF 3.763. Rackham's translation of the latter passage supports my interpretation more forcefully: '...the reasons both for remaining in life and departing from it are to be measured entirely by the primary things of nature aforesaid' (emphasis mine). Refer also to Plut. *De Stoic. repugn.* 1042d; *De Comm. not.* 1064c; *De Comm. not.* 1069e.

¹⁸ This interpretation goes back to John Cooper (1989, pp. 26–27). Cf. Barney (2003, p. 314); Brennan (2005, Chs. 12–13); Klein (2015, p. 273); Vogt (2014, p. 60). This characterization of the status of indifferents as sources of practical reasons had for a long time enjoyed widespread support among scholars. A formidable and impressive challenge to this account was offered by Jacob Klein (2015). Klein's proposal is that indifferents are not sources of practical reasons at all, but should rather be understood as sources of epistemic reasons to believe that ϕ -ing is

kathēkon. I cannot in this space do justice to the complexity and interest of Klein's proposal, but it is worth noting that his view operates in an importantly distinct problem space than our own. Whereas Klein's novel proposal is motivated by a concern for overcoming the apparent instability of the role of indifferents in Stoic practical reasoning and Stoic eudaimonism (i.e. the fact that indifferents are prospective objects of rational concern, but absolutely indifferent in retrospect), my paper is motivated by the apparent incongruence between the input of Stoic deliberation and its output.

¹⁹ On actions that are appropriate only in exigent circumstances (*kathēkon kata peristasin/officium ex tempore*), refer to D.L. 7.109 = SVF 3.496 = LS 59E.

²⁰ Reasons thus behave holistically, although this need not have any implications for the status of Stoic ethics as a generalist or particularist ethical theory (in either the metaphysical or epistemological senses of the term).

²¹ Our duties often fluctuate and become the opposite ('commutantur fiuntque contraria'), as Cicero says at *Off.* 1.31. According to the unorthodox Stoic Aristo, there is circumstantial variability in the axiological status of indifferents (refer to esp. S.E. M11.64–67).

²² For one version of this model, refer to Annas (1998, p. 249).

²³ For plausible textual evidence, refer to Sen. *Ep.* 92.11 and Cic. *Off.* 3.13. Refer also to Brennan (2005, p. 183) and the note by Griffin & Atkins in Cicero (1991, p. 105 n2).

²⁴ Barney dubs her version of this solution the 'dualist model' (2003, p. 330), while Brennan dubs his own version of it the 'Salva Virtute' model of deliberation (2005, p. 184).

²⁵ This is the view that M.M. McCabe attributes to the early Greek Stoics, and which 'runs directly counter to any principle of egoism, extended or otherwise' (McCabe 2005, p. 428). Refer also to Barney (2003, p. 326).

²⁶ Epict. *Diss.* 1.9.4ff. Refer also to Cic. *Fin.* 3.62–64.

²⁷ I am grateful to two anonymous referees for pressing me to clarify my own position with respect to the foregoing strategy.

²⁸ As Annas puts it, formal egoism 'is the claim that, however unself-concerned is the content of the virtuous life you lead as a way of achieving *eudaimonia*, you are still in a sense egoistic, because the *eudaimonia* you are seeking to achieve is *yours*' (Annas 2017, p. 275). On the elements of Stoic eudaimonism as I understand them, including egoism, refer to Vazquez (2021, pp. 429–430). Cf. Epict. *Diss.* 2.22.18: 'For where one can say "I" and "mine" to that side must the creature perforce incline' (trans. Oldfather).

²⁹ For a clear statement of this view, refer to Klein (2016). Every person has a basic impulse to 'preserve itself' (*epi to terein heauto*), rooted in their initial attachment (*prōton oikeion*) to their own self and constitution (D.L. 7.85 = SVF 3.178 = LS 57A). This impulse persists throughout the process of moral development (*oikeiōsis*), even as one's behaviors become more cosmopolitan. It would be difficult to determine whether the Stoics are committed to formal egoism or impartiality solely on the basis of our evidence about their practical injunctions. I believe that question can only be settled by reflecting on the essential commitments of ancient eudaimonism, which should be approached with the defeasible presumption that the Stoics are not outliers but members of the Socratic tradition of eudaimonism. Our textual evidence is very often mixed, in part because it spans centuries of Greece and Rome, but also because the evidence is itself indeterminate. Consider Cato's injunction at *Fin.* 3.63: 'the very fact of being human requires that no human be considered a stranger to any other' (*ob id ipsum quod homo sit non alienum videri*). Passages like this are consistent with both extended egoism and impartiality and require independent evidence about ancient and Stoic eudaimonism to disambiguate. I am grateful to an anonymous referee for raising this pointed Stoic injunction by Cato.

³⁰ In the next section of this paper, I explore a view that correctly recognizes the role of impartial or altruistic considerations, but at the cost of abandoning a central feature of the puzzle as I understand it, namely, that the weight of (prudential-looking) indifferents like health and sickness are decisive in the determination of appropriate action.

³¹ An early version of this view was advanced by George Boys-Stones (1996; refer to esp. p. 85 and p. 87). Brennan (2005, Ch. 12) was the first to explicate the view with the precision and detail that has allowed me to formulate my own solution to the puzzle, so I take his formulation, which arose as a response to Rachel Barney's treatment of the puzzle, as paradigmatic. The view coheres with what many scholars continue to hold about Stoic ethics, so in some ways it is the standard view, and the view which enjoys wide currency.

³² *Off.* 3.13 is cited as key evidence for this view. Refer also to *Off.* 3.23–24.

³³ For an analogous move, refer to Barney (2003, p. 333).

³⁴ Refer to Brennan (2005, p. 207).

³⁵ Barney rejects a version of this proposal because it appears to collapse the categorical difference between indifferents and goods that was carefully established in Stoic axiology and represented in the analogy to games (2003, pp. 335–336). Refer also to Klein (2014).

³⁶ While the naturalness-only model introduces 'considerations other than indifferents', those additional considerations – such as patterns of distribution of advantage and harm, the general utility of society, and property-rights – are still, strictly speaking, *indifferent*. Deliberation on the naturalness-only model takes place 'within the game' and is 'based on considerations drawn exclusively from within the game' (Brennan 2005, p. 224), which is why 'the values on offer are all indifferents' (Brennan 2005, p. 222). So the naturalness-only model improves upon and replaces the indifferents-only model by introducing considerations that go beyond canonical indifferents like health and wealth, but which are nonetheless still considerations that are indifferent for the Stoics. The same is true of the no-shoving model, which improves upon and replaces the *Salva Virtute* model, which falls prey to the worries facing the modified deontological constraints strategy previously mentioned. Brennan believes the two newer models are 'deliberatively equivalent – yielding the same prescriptions in the same circumstances – as a result of the bridging-principles between acting contrary to what is just, and acting contrary to nature.' (Brennan 2005, p.220). I am grateful to an anonymous referee for pressing me to clarify the contours of Brennan's complex view.

³⁷ One might adopt a version of the natural values strategy on which these new considerations (e.g. the common utility) are bearers of selective value, rather than some new class of sources of reasons for action rooted in natural value. On my view, however, selective value is restricted to the *kinds* of indifferents enumerated with striking uniformity and consistency across our doxographic sources (one's own bodily integrity, wealth, and the like). My claim is not that the lists of indifferents found in sources such as Diogenes Laertius and Stobaeus are exhaustive of all *instances* of indifferents that have selective value and disvalue, but exhaustive of the *kinds* of indifferents that have selective value and disvalue. The kinds of sources of reasons that the natural values strategy introduces in order to resolve the puzzle – which on the view I advance later are extrinsic conditions on reasons rather than sources of reasons in their own right – are conspicuously absent from those lists. On the identification of canonical indifferents with the 'primary things in accordance with nature (*prōta kata phusin*), or things which are 'natural' in a narrower sense than the natural values strategy suggests, refer to endnote 38.

³⁸ Refer to Stob. *Ecl.* 2.79 = SVF 3.140 and Stob. *Ecl.* 2.82 = SVF 3.141. The 'primary things in accordance with nature' (*prōta kata phusin*) appear to be the same as the 'first principles of nature' (*prima naturae/principia naturae*) mentioned in Cato's account of Stoic moral development – which, again, are the things which possess value either because they accord with nature or are conducive to that state. The 'primary things in accordance with nature' are also mentioned in Book 5 of *Fin.*, and there they are said to include 'the sound preservation of all the parts of the body, good health, well-functioning senses, freedom from pain, strength, beauty, and so on' (*Fin.* 5.18).

³⁹ Compare these two senses to Eric Brown's suggestion to Martha Nussbaum about 'two viewpoints' (Nussbaum 2019, p. 259 n12: 'from the point of view of Providence, nothing is contrary to nature; from a local viewpoint, things like death are contrary to nature, in the sense that they mean the end of some natural organism.'). On this topic, refer to SVF 2.1168–1186.

⁴⁰ A version of the conditionality view was considered and rejected by Klein (2015, p. 256ff).

⁴¹ For Bader's account of why the conditioning relation holds, refer to (2015b, p. 186). The heterogeneity of the good as the final object of human striving is the basis for one of Kant's most fundamental criticisms of ancient moral philosophy (e.g. KpV 5:64; 5:111–112). On the heterogeneity of the good, refer to Bader (2015b); Silber (1960, pp. 93–99); Wood (1970, pp. 85–90).

⁴² It should be obvious why silencing cannot be the same thing as outweighing or trumping, since weighing of any sort implies commensurability.

⁴³ 'Canceling' is among the notions most frequently conflated with 'normative silencing', but it is helpful to consider other examples discussed by Bader, such as *lexical priority*. A good G_1 is *lexically prior* to another good G_2 when some betterness ordering determines that *any* quantity of good G_1 outweighs *any* quantity of good G_2 . Notice that lexical ordering requires a betterness relation (or third 'super-value') that encompasses the two conflicting values, while silencing does not (Bader 2015a, p. 174).

⁴⁴ Refer to Klein (2015, p.274) and Bonhöffer (1996, pp. 257–258).

⁴⁵ I am grateful to an anonymous referee for pressing me to clarify whether this episode is properly Stoic, rather than Ciceronian, especially as the passage comes in the third book of *De Officiis*, where Cicero explicitly states that he is charting new theoretical territory unexplored by Panaetius (*Off.* 3.7–8). However, while I reject the tendency to reduce Cicero to a mere source for Stoic and Hellenistic thought, I think the evidence in this work is securely Stoic. The stated aim of the treatise is both didactic and dogmatic, which is in stark contrast to Cicero's more aporetic dialogues. Cicero is aiming to educate his son about his duties and how to effectively deduce them. For this, Cicero is willing to side with the view he finds most plausible, namely the Stoic view (*Off.* 2.7). Christopher Gill writes that 'in *De Officiis* as a whole, Cicero adopts Stoic ideas wholeheartedly as the basis of his exposition, and in Book 3 especially, he adopts what is, in effect, a rigorous version of the Stoic position, as distinct from the Antiochean one' (Gill 2015, p. 244). I am open to the possibility that Cicero is merely *employing* the Stoic position for skeptical ends, as Charles Brittain (2015) suggests: 'Cicero may be adopting a similar strategy in *Off.* by using the Stoic line as a counter-weight to his son's Peripatetic studies (*Off.* 3.11): the Stoic line offers an impossible ideal (*Off.* 3.13–17), but one that is pedagogically useful owing to its clarity (*Off.* 3.20–22, 3.33)' (2015, p. 14 n5). Even in that case, what we find in Book 3 is Stoic material, whether for skeptical or dogmatic ends. For additional evidence of the Stoic character of this text, refer to *Off.* 1.6, 2.60, 3.7, and 3.20.

⁴⁶ I remain agnostic on the independence and relative weight of oath-keeping as a Stoic moral principle.

⁴⁷ Cicero countenances quasi-utilitarian exceptions on the basis of higher level principles. Refer to, for example, *Off.* 1.31.

⁴⁸ According to Cicero, the Stoics held that all conflict between the 'utile' and the 'honestum' is merely apparent. In cases of conflict, any considerations that pull against the right course of action are strictly illusory, owing their apparent weight to our own ignorance rather than any genuine conflict of values out in the world (*Off.* 3.35–6). This view aligns well with Stoic providentialism, which arguably implies the denial of tragic conflict.

⁴⁹ Refer to Woolf (2007, p. 335ff). Refer also to Cicero's discussion of the normative implications of one's individual constitution at *Off.* 1.107.

⁵⁰ I have modified Oldfather's 'detriment' to 'disvalue' for clarity about the underlying Stoic terminology.

⁵¹ On the interpretive difficulties surrounding this deliberative episode and others in Epictetus' role-based ethics, refer to Johnson (2014).

⁵² If Epictetus does in fact mean to imply that there is no scenario where one should hold the chamber pot, then that principle is more rigid and applicable across contexts than on the alternative interpretation. I remain agnostic on which interpretation of Epictetus is correct.

⁵³ Refer to, for example, Cicero's discussion of the appropriateness of Cato's suicide at *Off.* 1.112: 'Indeed, such differences of natures have so great a force that sometimes one man ought to

choose death for himself, while another ought not. For surely the case of Marcus Cato was different from that of the others who gave themselves up to Caesar in Africa?... But since nature had assigned to Cato an extraordinary seriousness...he had to die rather than look upon the face of a tyrant.' While I have focused on a self-regarding decision in which facts about one's character are prominent, elsewhere Epictetus enjoins that 'our duties (*kathēkonta*) are in general measured (*parametreitai*) by our social relationships (*scheseis*)' (*Enchiridion* 30, trans. Oldfather). On the notion of 'measure', refer to footnote 17.

⁵⁴ Refer also to Cic. *Off.* 3.21 and Epict. *Diss.* 2.5.24–6 on the importance of deliberating as a member of a larger community of gods and men. On this passage, refer to Klein (2015, p. 268). Refer also to two deliberative episodes concerning suicide that invoke pro-social principles at Sen. *Ep.* 78.1–2 and Epict. *Diss.* 2.15.4.

⁵⁵ It's not clear whether the fact of Regulus' oath carries normative weight over and above the two fundamental principles of justice enumerated by Cicero at *Off.* 1.31 ('harm no one' and 'serve the common good'). In this case, the pro-republic utility calculus and the normative force of the promise seem wholly coincident. For a detailed discussion, refer to Woolf (2007).

⁵⁶ For the plurality of individual constitutions, refer to *Off.* 1.109. Cf. De Lacy (1977); Gill (1988); Johnson (2014).

⁵⁷ Examples of this location can be found at Cic. *Off.* 1.6, 1.107; Hierocles *ap. Stob. Anth.* 4.79.53; Stob. *Ecl.* 2.62 = SVF 3.264.

⁵⁸ Refer to *Off.* 3.90 for a lifeboat ethics case in which there are two sages and only one plank to prevent drowning. The recommendation offered is that the plank go to the person whose life is more valuable 'for his own or the republic's sake' (*vel sua vel reipublicae causa*). While the fact that the two agents are sages ensures they will agree on which course of action is rational and in accordance with nature, it is not immediately clear, without further detail and situational discernment, whether 'for his own sake' would conflict with 'for the republic's sake.' Refer to Inwood (1984, p. 182).

⁵⁹ Refer to Epictetus *Diss.* 2.6.9 = SVF 3.191 = LS 58 J: 'Therefore Chrysippus was right to say: "As long as the future is uncertain to me I always hold to those things which are better adapted to obtaining the things in accordance with nature; for god himself has made me disposed to select these. But if I actually knew that I was fated now to be ill, I would even have an impulse to be ill. For my foot, too, if it had intelligence, would have an impulse to get muddy"' (trans. Long & Sedley). Refer also to *Diss.* 2.10.5–6.

⁶⁰ Refer to Wood (2017, pp. 14–15). Refer also to Hierocles *ap. Stob. Anth.* 4.67.2: '...when our reason is intent on nature as on a target that is well lit and fixed, it chooses preferentially everything that is in harmony with nature and can make us live in the way one ought' (*kathēkontōs*) (trans. Konstan).

⁶¹ Refer to *Off.* 1.114. Cf. Bett (2000, p. 94) and Woolf (2007, p. 332). I am not intending to take a stand on the well-established debate over the place of rules in Stoic moral reasoning, although I do hope to explore the implications of my view on this subject in future work. On this topic, refer to Inwood (1999), Kidd (1978), and Mitsis (1994).

⁶² On this point, refer to Section 4. I am grateful to an anonymous referee for pointing out the urgency of addressing this aspect of the difference between my view and the natural values strategy.

⁶³ On Aristo, refer to Ioppolo (2012) and Marrin (2020).

⁶⁴ Refer to S.E. M11.63 = SVF 1.361. Refer also to S.E. M11.65 and D.L. 7.160 = SVF 1.351.

⁶⁵ For helpful feedback on earlier drafts of this manuscript, I am grateful to audiences at the Penn Normative Philosophy Group at the University of Pennsylvania, the Princeton Classical Philosophy WIP group, and the Hellenistic Philosophy Society at the American Philosophical Association Pacific Division Meeting. I benefited from my conversations with Eilidh Beaton, Tad Brennan, Eric Brown, Chetan Cetty, Andree Hahmann, Sukaina Hirji, Jacob Klein, Max Lewis, Errol Lord, Susan Sauvé Meyer, Daniel Muñoz, Brian Reese, and Georgia Tsouni. I

owe a special debt of gratitude to Max Lewis and Susan Sauvé Meyer for their tireless support and incisive feedback from beginning to end. I am also very grateful to two anonymous referees, whose comments and questions greatly improved this paper. All errors that remain are my own.

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