



## BIROn - Birkbeck Institutional Research Online

Sellars, John (2012) Stoics against stoics in Cudworth's "A Treatise of Freewill". *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 20 (5), pp. 935-952. ISSN 0960-8788.

Downloaded from: <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/id/eprint/8146/>

*Usage Guidelines:*

Please refer to usage guidelines at <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/policies.html> or alternatively contact [lib-eprints@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:lib-eprints@bbk.ac.uk).

*Stoics Against Stoics in  
Cudworth's A Treatise of Freewill*

JOHN SELLARS

*Abstract*

In his *A Treatise of Freewill*, Ralph Cudworth argues against Stoic determinism by drawing on what he takes to be other concepts found in Stoicism, notably the claim that some things are 'up to us' (ἐφ' ἡμῖν) and that these things are the product of our choice (προαίρεσις). These concepts are central to the late Stoic Epictetus and it appears at first glance as if Cudworth is opposing late Stoic voluntarism against early Stoic determinism. This paper argues that in fact, despite his claim to be drawing on Stoic doctrine, Cudworth uses these terms with a meaning first articulated only later, by the Peripatetic commentator Alexander of Aphrodisias.

When Ralph Cudworth died in 1688 he left his *magnum opus*, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*, unfinished, having only published in 1678 the first of three intended parts.<sup>1</sup> The original plan, outlined in the Preface published with the first part, was to confront three philosophical enemies: atheism, moral subjectivism, and determinism.<sup>2</sup> Material intended for the second and third parts was published posthumously, in 1731 and 1838, under the respective titles *A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality* and *A Treatise of Freewill*.<sup>3</sup> The latter was drawn from one of five

---

<sup>1</sup> *The True Intellectual System of the Universe: The First Part, Wherein all the Reason and Philosophy of Atheism is Confuted and its Impossibility Demonstrated* (London: Richard Royston, 1678). An abridged version by Thomas Wise was published in 1706 and a Latin translation with notes by J. L. Mosheim was published in 1733. A second English edition by Thomas Birch was published in 1743 and this was reissued in 1820. A new edition in 1845 included Mosheim's notes, translated from the Latin by John Harrison. All references are to the first edition.

<sup>2</sup> *The True Intellectual System*, Preface, fol. 2 v.: 'And all these three under that one general title of *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*, each book having besides its own particular title: [1] as against atheism; [2] for natural justice and morality, founded in the Deity; [3] for liberty from necessity' (numbers added; punctuation and capitalization modernized).

<sup>3</sup> *A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality* [...] With a preface by [...] Edward Lord Bishop of Durham (London: James & John Knapton, 1731) and *A Treatise of Freewill*, Now first edited, from the original MS., and with notes, by John Allen (London: John W. Parker, 1838). Both texts are reprinted in *A Treatise Concerning Eternal and*

manuscripts containing material arguing against determinism, now all in The British Library.<sup>4</sup>

Cudworth makes clear in his Preface that his original intention was simply to write ‘a discourse concerning liberty and necessity’ and in particular to write ‘against the fatal necessity of all actions and events’.<sup>5</sup> Of his three philosophical enemies Cudworth held determinism to be the most dangerous because, by undermining the role of praise and blame, it makes ‘a day of judgement ridiculous’ and thereby destroys respect for God.<sup>6</sup> Cudworth opens *The True Intellectual System* by raising the problem of ‘the necessity of all human actions and events’ but soon moves on to tackle various forms of atheism, deferring his main task to the never-completed third part.<sup>7</sup> Cudworth’s short posthumous *A Treatise of Freewill* stands as fragment of what was planned to be the summit and completion of his philosophical project.

Cudworth’s approach to the problem of atheism in *A True Intellectual System* was to suggest that the best way to get philosophically clear about the various forms that atheism can take is to trace those positions to their earliest, and so clearest, expressions in antiquity. In the case of atomistic atheism, for instance, it is necessary to go back beyond Epicurean libertarianism to the original Democritean position in order to realize that

---

*Immutable Morality* with *A Treatise of Freewill*, edited by Sarah Hutton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). All subsequent references to *A Treatise of Freewill* are to the original chapter divisions followed by the pagination of Hutton’s edition.

<sup>4</sup> The Cudworth MSS on liberty and necessity are BL Addit. 4978-82, of which 4978 became *A Treatise of Freewill*. For a description of these see J. A. Passmore, *Ralph Cudworth: An Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), 110-13. For a transcription of the opening pages of BL Addit. 4981, with an introduction by J.-L. Breteau, see *The Cambridge Platonists in Philosophical Context*, edited by G. A. J. Rogers, J. M. Vienne, and Y.-C. Zarka (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1997), 217-31.

<sup>5</sup> *The True Intellectual System*, Preface, fol. 1 r.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> *The True Intellectual System*, 3.

atheism and determinism are inevitably intertwined.<sup>8</sup> However, Cudworth goes further and suggests that if these doctrines are traced back far enough we shall realize that all forms of atheism are mere corruptions of earlier forms of theism, and so he credits atomistic theism (of which Democritean atomistic atheism is a corruption) to one Mochus of Sidon.<sup>9</sup>

We find the same methodological approach at work in Cudworth's *A Treatise of Freewill*, where he identifies the determinism of Hobbes as one of his principal targets but then traces the view back to antiquity, turning to Cicero's *De fato* for an account of the Stoic version of determinism.<sup>10</sup> What is striking about Cudworth's argument against Stoic determinism, however, is the way in which he explicitly claims to draw on Stoic doctrine for resources in his fight against the Stoics. Although the Stoics propose a pernicious form of thoroughgoing determinism they also, Cudworth suggests, acknowledge that rational beings are able to act freely. Cudworth writes 'according to that Stoical doctrine that the truest and greatest goods and evils of rational beings consist ἐν τοῖς προαιρετικοῖς or ἐν τοῖς ἐφ' ἡμῖν [i.e.] in their own free willed actions or things in their own power'.<sup>11</sup> The Stoic concepts that Cudworth alludes to here, the ideas that some things are ἐφ' ἡμῖν or 'up to us' and that these are in some way connected to our προαίρεσις or choice, play a central role in the philosophy of the late Stoic Epictetus. It looks, at first glance, as if Cudworth is drawing on late Stoic voluntarism to attack early Stoic determinism, in effect turning Stoics against Stoics.

---

<sup>8</sup> See *The True Intellectual System*, Preface, fol. 3 v.

<sup>9</sup> See *The True Intellectual System*, 12.

<sup>10</sup> See *A Treatise of Freewill*, ch. 2, pp. 158-9, citing Cicero, *De fato* 35. On Cudworth's polemics against Hobbes see S. I. Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan: Seventeenth-Century Reactions to the Materialism and Moral Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 96-102, 126-33; Y.-C. Zarka, 'Critique de Hobbes et fondement de la morale chez Cudworth', in *The Cambridge Platonists in Philosophical Context*, edited by G. A. J. Rogers, J. M. Vienne, and Y.-C. Zarka (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1997), 39-52.

<sup>11</sup> *A Treatise of Freewill*, ch. 1, p. 157.

The aim of what follows is to examine this apparent turning of Stoics against Stoics in Cudworth's discussion of free will and determinism. The first section outlines the central project of *A Treatise of Freewill* and discusses Cudworth's objections to Stoic determinism. The second section examines the apparently Stoic terminology that Cudworth deploys in response to Stoic determinism, terminology that we find throughout the works of Epictetus. As we shall see, although this terminology is indeed central in Epictetus, the context in which he uses it is significantly different from the one in which Cudworth is working. The third and final section will suggest that, due to these differences, Cudworth cannot be using these concepts with the sense that Epictetus attaches to them. Instead it will be suggested that the Peripatetic commentator Alexander of Aphrodisias is a more likely source for Cudworth's resources in his battle against Stoic determinism.

### *1. Cudworth's Project in A Treatise of Freewill*

Cudworth's project in *A Treatise of Freewill* is to argue against all forms of determinism and in favour of the claim that we possess a free will. In the opening chapter of the text he says that we have a natural instinct that leads us to believe that some things are ἐφ' ἡμῶν or 'in our own power'.<sup>12</sup> This natural instinct is illustrated by the fact that we praise and blame the actions of others, on the presumption that those actions were freely chosen, and by the fact that we feel guilt when we don't act as well as we might, again presuming that those actions were freely chosen and so our own responsibility. We would not praise and blame and feel guilt, Cudworth claims, if human actions were necessary or determined.<sup>13</sup> And when we

---

<sup>12</sup> *A Treatise of Freewill*, ch. 1, p. 155.

<sup>13</sup> See *A Treatise of Freewill*, ch. 1, p. 155.

encounter things that are necessary – or at least out of our control – such as illness for instance, we do not praise or blame people or feel a sense of guilt. So, our natural instinct on these matters separates out what is within our control from what is not. Our sense of justice, Cudworth suggests, offers another illustration of this inherent natural instinct concerning liberty and necessity.<sup>14</sup> We do not punish the animal that acts viciously, even though we might restrain it, but we do punish the human who acts viciously precisely because we hold that it was within their power to act other than they did. Christian doctrine also teaches that we are free in our actions, so both natural instinct and Scripture agree that some things are ἐφ’ ἡμῶν or within our own power.<sup>15</sup> The task of *A Treatise of Freewill* is to offer further illustrations of this fact and to undermine the arguments of those who deny it in favour of some form of determinism.

In the second chapter Cudworth identifies his principal targets, naming Hobbes but then quickly moving back to antiquity in order to locate earlier examples of determinism.<sup>16</sup> He quickly turns his attention to the Stoics, drawing as we have noted on Cicero, and it is then in the third chapter that Cudworth explicitly begins his argument against Stoic determinism. He begins by presenting their doctrine of cyclical recurrence, which posits periodic conflagrations of the world separating cycles of events, where each cycle is an exact and necessary repetition of the previous one, in which, as Cudworth puts it, ‘there must be all along the same or like men, doing all the same things exactly’.<sup>17</sup> Cudworth objects that this not only seems to

---

<sup>14</sup> See *A Treatise of Freewill*, ch. 1, p. 156.

<sup>15</sup> See *A Treatise of Freewill*, ch. 1, p. 157.

<sup>16</sup> See n. 10 above.

<sup>17</sup> *A Treatise of Freewill*, ch. 3, p. 161. On the Stoic doctrine of cyclical recurrence see the fragments collected in *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* [hereafter *SVF*], edited by H. von Arnim, 4 vols (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903-24), 2.596-632. For discussion (with references to earlier literature), see R. Salles, ‘Determinism and Recurrence in Early Stoic Thought’, *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 24 (2003), 253-72.

rule out the possibility of any human freedom of action but it also turns God into a ‘necessary agent’, unable to change any events from one cycle to the next. He writes, ‘they supposing God Almighty himself to be a necessary agent too, and, therefore, that after the several conflagrations, he must needs put things in the very same posture he had before’.<sup>18</sup> Here Cudworth is drawing on the account of Celsus, recorded, and then attacked, by Origen in his *Contra Celsum*.<sup>19</sup> In responding to this Stoic doctrine Cudworth quotes at length from Origen’s response to Celsus,<sup>20</sup> which is another important source of evidence for wider Stoic thinking about human action and determinism, insofar as it reports the Stoic response to the famous ‘idle argument’,<sup>21</sup> also recounted in Cicero.<sup>22</sup> We can note, then, that while writing *A Treatise of Freewill* Cudworth had to hand two important sources for Stoic views on the issues with which he was concerned.<sup>23</sup>

Having introduced his enemies in the second and third chapters, Cudworth proceeds to offer a whole series of responses to the various arguments against free will in the subsequent sections of the text. I shall not go through all of these here but I shall note that towards the end of the text Cudworth returns again to Hobbes and the Stoics, addressing their shared claim that ‘nothing can be without a cause, and whatsoever hath a cause

---

<sup>18</sup> *A Treatise of Freewill*, ch. 3, p. 161.

<sup>19</sup> See Origen, *Contra Celsum* (text edited by P. Koetschau in *Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller*, 2 vols [Leipzig: Hinricks, 1899]) 4.67. I note the very helpful annotated translation by H. Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953).

<sup>20</sup> *A Treatise of Freewill*, ch. 3, pp. 161-2, quoting *Contra Celsum* 4.67-8 (part *SVF* 2.626; trans. Chadwick, pp. 237-8).

<sup>21</sup> See Origen, *Contra Celsum* 2.20 (*SVF* 2.957; trans. Chadwick, p. 86). For discussion of the ‘idle argument’ (ἄργος λόγος) see e.g. S. Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 182-98.

<sup>22</sup> See Cicero, *De fato* 28-30 (part *SVF* 2.956).

<sup>23</sup> As we shall see, I shall suggest that Cudworth may well have drawn on a third, equally important, source for Stoic determinism, namely Alexander of Aphrodisias’ *De fato*, which he also appears to have had at hand (cf. *A Treatise of Freewill*, ch. 6, p. 170).

must of necessity come to pass'.<sup>24</sup> So, at both the beginning and the end of *A Treatise of Freewill*, the Stoics are conjoined with Hobbes, which is not a coupling that we might expect.<sup>25</sup> And yet it is worth noting that others in the seventeenth century also branded Hobbes a Stoic when it came to determinism, notably John Bramhall in his discussions with Hobbes over liberty and necessity.<sup>26</sup> There Bramhall characterizes Hobbes as a Stoic and here Cudworth writes of Hobbes' position 'this childish and ridiculous nonsense and sophistry of his was stolen from the Stoics too, who played the fools in logic after the same manner'.<sup>27</sup>

So, Cudworth's contemporary target Hobbes merely repeats an ancient error first made by the Stoics. If Cudworth can undermine the more noble ancient position then its modern derivatives will fall with it. The Stoic error is that they insist that: (a) everything must have a sufficient cause, and anything caused must necessarily come to pass;<sup>28</sup> (b) the cyclical recurrence of events destroys individual freedom;<sup>29</sup> and (c) God is placed under the power of necessity.<sup>30</sup> In short, a range of features of Stoic physics undermines our belief in the autonomy of human action.

---

<sup>24</sup> *A Treatise of Freewill*, ch. 22, p. 203.

<sup>25</sup> On the perhaps unexpected connection between Hobbes and Stoicism see J. C. Kassler, 'The Paradox of Power: Hobbes and Stoic Naturalism', in *The Uses of Antiquity: The Scientific Revolution and the Classical Tradition*, edited by S. Gaukroger (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991), 53-78.

<sup>26</sup> See Bramhall's debate with Hobbes on liberty, necessity, and chance in vol. 5 of *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, edited by W. Molesworth, 11 vols (London: John Bohn, 1839-45), e.g. vol. 5, pp. 118, 148, 198, 238-9.

<sup>27</sup> *A Treatise of Freewill*, ch. 22, p. 204.

<sup>28</sup> *A Treatise of Freewill*, ch. 22, p. 203.

<sup>29</sup> *A Treatise of Freewill*, ch. 3, p. 162.

<sup>30</sup> *A Treatise of Freewill*, ch. 3, pp. 160-1.



## 2. Echoes of Epictetus

At first glance, then, Cudworth is explicitly arguing against Stoic determinism. However, the matter is complicated when we pay attention to the terminology that Cudworth uses to articulate his own alternative to the determinist position. As we have seen, Cudworth opens the first chapter of *A Treatise of Freewill* by claiming that it is by natural instinct that we have a sense that some things are ἐφ' ἡμῖν or 'in our own power'.<sup>31</sup> The phrase ἐφ' ἡμῖν has a long and complex history in ancient philosophy. We find it used by Aristotle, by early Stoics such as Chrysippus, by late Stoics such as Epictetus, by Plotinus, and by a range of other late ancient authors grappling with issues related to human action.<sup>32</sup> These authors often use the phrase in quite different senses, so it is necessary to ask with which sense does Cudworth use the phrase. As we have seen, Cudworth suggests he is using the phrase in a Stoic sense.<sup>33</sup> However, the early Stoic Chrysippus and the late Stoic Epictetus use the phrase with different senses.

While for Chrysippus ἐφ' ἡμῖν refers simply to anything for which we might be the cause,<sup>34</sup> for Epictetus it refers only to those things that are

---

<sup>31</sup> *A Treatise of Freewill*, ch. 1, p. 155.

<sup>32</sup> For a helpful survey see E. Eliasson, *The Notion of That Which Depends On Us in Plotinus and Its Background* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

<sup>33</sup> See *A Treatise of Freewill*, ch. 1, p. 157, quoted above.

<sup>34</sup> There is unfortunately no direct evidence for the claim that Chrysippus used this phrase. Our most important sources for Chrysippus himself are in Latin, such as Cicero's *De fato* (esp. 41-4 = *SVF* 2.974), and these use the phrase *in nostra potestate*. However, this is an almost standard Latin equivalent for ἐφ' ἡμῖν (and Cudworth himself uses it as such in the opening line of *A Treatise of Freewill*). The texts concerned with fate assembled in *SVF* (2.974-1007) that use ἐφ' ἡμῖν are all of a much later date (principally Alexander, Origen). The closest I have found to evidence for Chrysippus using ἐφ' ἡμῖν is the summary of his position in Nemesius, *De natura hominis* 35 (ed. M. Morani [Leipzig: Teubner, 1987], 105,12-17 = *SVF* 2. 991). See further, Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom*, 280-1; Eliasson, *The Notion of That Which Depends On Us*, 82-97.

completely under our control.<sup>35</sup> For instance, if I choose to go for a walk and I meet no obstacles then the walk that I take is ‘up to me’ (or we might more naturally say ‘down to me’) in the sense of it being my action caused by me, on the early Stoic view.<sup>36</sup> But for Epictetus walking is not one of the things ‘up to us’ because it is something that can always in principle be obstructed.<sup>37</sup> I have no absolute control over whether I can go for a walk when I want to due to a whole range of external factors that might stop me from doing so. Only those things that are so completely under my control that they can never be hindered are ἐφ’ ἡμῖν or ‘up to us’ according to Epictetus. Ultimately the only thing that is up to me in this sense is my judgement, the choices and assents that I make, my use of impressions as he sometimes puts it.<sup>38</sup> By contrast my body and anything I might try to do in the physical world is not up to me due to the contingent obstacles that might intervene.<sup>39</sup> I have no control over my body because I have no control over my health or a whole range of other factors that might impede it, but I do have control over the judgements that I make and no external factors can ever force me to change my judgement against my will. Epictetus’ concern here is not Cudworth’s metaphysical problem of free will, then, but rather a more practical concern with learning how to avoid frustration and disappointment. He offers an example of what Isaiah Berlin called ‘positive freedom’ and his remarks belong within the context of a debate about political liberty.<sup>40</sup> Those remarks remain neutral with regard

---

<sup>35</sup> See e.g. Epictetus, *Enchiridion* 1.1-2; *Dissertationes* 1.22.10. On this see Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy*, 331-8; Eliasson, *The Notion of That Which Depends On Us*, 109-14.

<sup>36</sup> This position is explicitly attributed to Chrysippus in Nemesius, *De natura hominis* 35 (105,6-17 Morani; *SVF* 2. 991).

<sup>37</sup> The example of walking is discussed in Epictetus, *Dissertationes* 4.1.68-75.

<sup>38</sup> See e.g. Epictetus, *Dissertationes* 3.22.21; 3.22.103: ἡ χρῆσις τῶν φαντασιῶν. Epictetus gives us a list of things that count as ἐφ’ ἡμῖν at *Enchiridion* 1.1.

<sup>39</sup> See *Enchiridion* 1.1 again for examples.

<sup>40</sup> See I. Berlin, ‘Two Concepts of Liberty’, in his *Liberty*, edited by H. Hardy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 166-217, esp. 186.

to the question of causal determinism and that is a question that Epictetus does not really address. This neutrality means that his late Stoic position remains compatible with early Stoic determinism, even if at first glance he may appear heterodox.<sup>41</sup> Consequently there is no philosophical dispute between Chrysippus and Epictetus even though they use ἐφ' ἡμῖν in quite different senses.

There are two points here that are worth underlining. The first point is that if Cudworth is using ἐφ' ἡμῖν in a Stoic sense, as he claims, then he must be thinking of Epictetus, and not Chrysippus, given that he uses it to refer to human choice rather than causal responsibility. The second point concerns Cudworth's conjoining of ἐφ' ἡμῖν with the notion of προαίρεσις or choice. As we have seen, Cudworth attributes to the Stoics the idea that 'the truest and greatest goods and evils of rational beings consist ἐν τοῖς προαιρετικοῖς or ἐν τοῖς ἐφ' ἡμῖν [i.e.] in their own free willed actions or things in their own power'.<sup>42</sup> Now, ἐν τοῖς προαιρετικοῖς is a phrase that we find in Epictetus' *Discourses*,<sup>43</sup> and προαιρετικά is a term that Epictetus uses interchangeably with ἐφ' ἡμῖν,<sup>44</sup> and these introduce the key Epictetan concept of προαίρεσις.<sup>45</sup> Epictetus uses this term to refer to our choice or volition, or even our self, for there is a sense in which for Epictetus our choice is all that is properly ours, for it is the only thing that

---

<sup>41</sup> This appearance led R. Dobbin, 'Προαίρεσις in Epictetus', *Ancient Philosophy* 11 (1991), 111-35, at e.g. 121, to claim that Epictetus broke with earlier Stoic determinism, but most commentators rightly reject that claim; see e.g. Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom*, 335.

<sup>42</sup> *A Treatise of Freewill*, ch. 1, p. 157.

<sup>43</sup> See e.g. Epictetus, *Dissertationes* 1.22.18; 2.1.10; 2.10.8-9; 4.10.8.

<sup>44</sup> See A. A. Long, *Epictetus: A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 212.

<sup>45</sup> For discussion of the role of προαίρεσις in Epictetus see e.g. Dobbin, 'Προαίρεσις in Epictetus'; Long, *Epictetus*, ch. 8; R. Sorabji, *Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), ch. 10; R. Sorabji, 'Epictetus on Proairesis and Self', in *The Philosophy of Epictetus*, edited by T. Scaltsas and A. S. Mason (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 87-98.

is ἐφ' ἡμῶν or within our control.<sup>46</sup> As before, this is a pragmatic ethical claim rather than a metaphysical one.

The notion that there might be some conceptual connection between the terms ἐφ' ἡμῶν and προαίρεσις is not unique to Epictetus, however, as a connection between the two had been drawn by Aristotle, who defines προαίρεσις as 'the deliberate desire of things ἐφ' ἡμῶν'.<sup>47</sup> However it is worth noting that Epictetus and Aristotle conjoin the two notions in quite different ways.<sup>48</sup> When Aristotle writes in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that προαίρεσις is 'the deliberate desire of things ἐφ' ἡμῶν',<sup>49</sup> he is saying that our choice is a choice *of* things that are 'up to us'; we choose between actions that are within our power, for instance; whereas for Epictetus it is our faculty of choice itself that has become the only thing properly 'up to us'.<sup>50</sup> Epictetus offers us an example in the opening chapter of the first book of the *Discourses*, where he imagines an exchange with a tyrant. To the tyrant who threatens to restrain him, Epictetus responds by saying 'You will restrain *me*? My leg you may chain up but my προαίρεσις not even Zeus himself has the power to control'.<sup>51</sup> And elsewhere, in the

---

<sup>46</sup> See e.g. Epictetus, *Dissertationes* 1.22.10. Note that, for a Stoic holding a monistic psychology, this 'choice' cannot be a separate faculty and so is often treated as simply another way of describing the self.

<sup>47</sup> Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* 3.3, 1113a10-11; lines 9-11 read: ὄντος δὲ τοῦ προαιρετοῦ βουλευτοῦ ὀρεκτοῦ τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῶν, καὶ ἡ προαίρεσις ἂν εἴη βουλευτική ὄρεξις τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῶν. For discussion of Aristotle's use of προαίρεσις see e.g. R. Sorabji, 'Aristotle on the Role of Intellect in Virtue', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 74 (1973-4), 107-29, esp. 107-12; A. Kenny, *Aristotle's Theory of the Will* (London: Duckworth, 1979), 69-80, along with the studies comparing Aristotle and Epictetus cited in the next note. For Aristotle on ἐφ' ἡμῶν see E. Eliasson, *The Notion of That Which Depends On Us*, 47-61.

<sup>48</sup> For discussion of the difference between Aristotle and Epictetus see Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom*, 402-3; Sorabji, *Self*, 188-91. Both are also discussed in C. H. Kahn, 'Discovering the Will: From Aristotle to Augustine', in *The Question of "Eclecticism": Studies in Later Greek Philosophy*, edited by J. M. Dillon and A. A. Long (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 234-59.

<sup>49</sup> Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* 3.3, 1113a10-11.

<sup>50</sup> See Epictetus, *Dissertationes* 1.22.10.

<sup>51</sup> Epictetus, *Dissertationes* 1.1.23 (a paraphrase rather than a translation).

*Enchiridion*, he writes that ‘illness is an impediment to the body, but not to one’s προαίρεσις’ and so illness is ‘an impediment to something else, but to not yourself.’<sup>52</sup> For Epictetus, then, one’s προαίρεσις is what we essentially are, and identified with what is ‘up to us’. If I were trying to give a complete account of Epictetus’ position here I would of course need to add various qualifications,<sup>53</sup> but the important point for our present purposes is that this is quite different from Aristotle’s view. So we need to be aware that there are two distinct relations between these technical terms available. But in any case, Cudworth is not talking about Aristotle here; as we have seen, he is explicit that he is thinking of Stoic doctrine, and among the Stoics it is Epictetus who conjoins these two terms.

The first point we considered earlier shows that Cudworth uses ἐφ’ ἡμῖν in an Epictetean rather than Chrysippean sense; now this second point shows that he joins ἐφ’ ἡμῖν with προαίρεσις in an Epictetean rather than Aristotelian way. Both points suggest that Cudworth uses the phrase ἐφ’ ἡμῖν with the same sense given to it by Epictetus.

Alongside ἐφ’ ἡμῖν and προαίρεσις we find a third term with Stoic provenance in Cudworth and this is ἡγεμονικόν. Epictetus uses both προαίρεσις and ἡγεμονικόν regularly, although not quite synonymously.<sup>54</sup> In brief, the ἡγεμονικόν, which we might very loosely translate as mind, which is sometimes translated as ‘governing principle’, and which Christopher Gill has recently rendered as ‘control-centre’,<sup>55</sup> overlaps with one’s προαίρεσις but it is broader, encompassing not only our choices but

---

<sup>52</sup> Epictetus, *Enchiridion* 9 (same caveat).

<sup>53</sup> For the sorts of qualifications needed see Sorabji, *Self*, ch. 10.

<sup>54</sup> See Long, *Epictetus*, 211.

<sup>55</sup> C. Gill, *The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 33.

also our impressions and impulses.<sup>56</sup> One of these parts of the ἡγεμονικόν, our capacity to receive impressions, is passive, in the sense that we do not have control over the content of our impressions, so they are not ‘up to us’ in the way that our προαίρεσις or choice is. So, there is a difference between these two concepts.

Cudworth introduces the term in Chapter 9, where he calls it ‘the ruling, governing, commanding, determining principle in us’,<sup>57</sup> rolling a variety of possible translations all into one. It is here, in this ruling principle, that we shall find what is ‘up to us’ Cudworth suggests, following an Epictetean understanding of ‘up to us’.<sup>58</sup> Cudworth also suggests that this concept of the ἡγεμονικόν was explored by ‘the Greek philosophers after Aristotle’,<sup>59</sup> without being any more specific, although at this point he cites Origen as his immediate source.<sup>60</sup> But Cudworth’s gloss on the passage, drawing on the sixteenth century Latin translation of Sigismundus Gelenius, indicates that he understood the term to refer to each person’s reason (*sua cuique ratio*), a thoroughly rational principle which is the source of our good and bad actions;<sup>61</sup> in other words, he seems to have understood the term in broadly the same sense as the Stoics did.

In short, then, Cudworth’s defence of free will is made using terminology that designates three key and closely-related concepts that we find in the

---

<sup>56</sup> See e.g. Aetius 4.21.1 (*SVF* 2.836); Diogenes Laertius 7.159 (*SVF* 2.837).

<sup>57</sup> *A Treatise of Freewill*, ch. 9, p. 175.

<sup>58</sup> See *A Treatise of Freewill*, ch. 9, p. 175.

<sup>59</sup> *A Treatise of Freewill*, ch. 9, p. 175.

<sup>60</sup> See Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4.65 (trans. Chadwick, p. 237).

<sup>61</sup> See *Origenis Contra Celsum Libri Octo*, edited by William Spencer (Cambridge, 1658), containing the Latin translation of Sigismundus Gelenius in parallel with the Greek text, p. 207, where Gelenius renders τὸ ἐκάστου ἡγεμονικόν as *sua cuique ratio*. *Contra* Hutton’s note to Cudworth’s text, p. 176, this edition does not contain a commentary by Gelenius (although it does contain some notes by Spencer and others); Cudworth is simply drawing on the translation.

late Stoic philosopher Epictetus: ἐφ’ ἡμῖν, προαίρεσις, and ἡγεμονικόν. While there is explicit evidence that Cudworth was well aware that these were Stoic terms, there isn’t any to confirm that he was taking them directly from Epictetus.<sup>62</sup> He may have drawn on later sources influenced by Epictetus, such as Origen or the Neoplatonists, and the Neoplatonists of course borrowed from Stoicism, using their resources within a philosophical system that opposes itself to Stoic materialism and determinism.<sup>63</sup> Cudworth was intimately familiar with the works of Plotinus and the subsequent Neoplatonists, and so it is possible that he may have taken the terms from any one of them.<sup>64</sup> However, as we have seen, Cudworth explicitly attributes this notion to the Stoics, and as a rule the Neoplatonists rarely acknowledged their borrowings from the Stoa, making a Neoplatonic source less likely.

Putting source questions to one side for the moment, what is striking here is the way in which Cudworth is deploying one set of Stoic concepts in opposition to another set, setting late Stoic voluntarism against early Stoic determinism we might say. *We might say*, but we would be wrong to do so.

---

<sup>62</sup> However there is plenty of evidence that Cudworth was familiar with Epictetus’ texts. Epictetus’ *Enchiridion* or *Handbook* opens with a distinction between those things that are ‘up to us’ (ἐφ’ ἡμῖν) and those that are not (οὐκ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν), and we know that Cudworth was familiar with this as he had a copy of the commentary on it written by the Neoplatonist Simplicius, which he cites in *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (pp. 231, 558). See the *Bibliotheca Cudworthiana, sive Catalogus Variorum Librorum Plurimis Facultatibus. Insignium Bibliothecae Instructissimae Rev. Doct. Dr. Cudworth* (London, 1690/1), 16, listing Heinsius’ edition of Simplicius’ *Commentarius in Epicteti Enchiridion* (Leiden, 1640). For discussion see P. Hadot, ‘La survie du Commentaire de Simplicius sur le Manuel d’Épictète du XVe au XVIIe siècles: Perotti, Politien, Steuchus, John Smith, Cudworth’, in *Simplicius, sa vie, son oeuvre, sa survie*, edited by I. Hadot (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1987), 326-67, esp. 351-54. Cudworth also owned two other editions of Epictetus as well; see the *Bibliotheca Cudworthiana*, 20, listing an edition of Wolf’s *Enchiridion* and *Dissertationes* (Cambridge, 1655), and 26, listing an edition of the *Enchiridion* (Leiden, 1648).

<sup>63</sup> See A. Graeser, *Plotinus and the Stoics* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), esp. the essay ‘Plotinus on Man’s Free Will’, 112-25.

<sup>64</sup> For instance, the notion of what is ἐφ’ ἡμῖν is discussed at length by Plotinus in *Ennead* 6.8, on which see Eliasson, *The Notion of That Which Depends On Us*, 187-215.

The reason why we would be wrong to do so is because, as I noted earlier, Epictetus' use of these key terms does not take place within the context of a discussion about the metaphysical problem of free will versus determinism. Epictetus' concern when he talks about our προαίρεσις and the fact that it is the only thing that is ἐφ' ἡμῶν or 'up to us' is with what we might call a practical and pragmatic ethical issue about how to avoid frustration and disappointment in our lives. For if we make our happiness dependent upon the fulfilment of desires, the fulfilment of which is out of our control, then we are bound to find ourselves disappointed much of the time. But if we only desire those things that are ἐφ' ἡμῶν then we shall never be disappointed. Thus Epictetus' council is that our only object of concern should be our judgements, for these are the only things guaranteed to be within our control. This ethical advice says nothing about the question of whether our judgements are absolutely free from the influence of antecedent causes or whether they are necessarily determined by the state of our character, our existing beliefs, and so on. Epictetus doesn't really take a stand on the metaphysical question that exercises Cudworth.

This raises a number of questions, most notably why is it that Epictetus seemingly has no interest in the metaphysical problem of free will, and why and how is it that, despite this, Cudworth seems to be using this Epictetean terminology in his discussion of the metaphysical problem, terminology that it now looks as if it might not be relevant to that debate. In order to answer both of these questions (or at least to indicate where we might start to look for a answer) I want to bring into the discussion another ancient philosopher, one that Cudworth only mentions in passing in *A Treatise of Freewill*, namely the Peripatetic commentator Alexander of



Aphrodisias.<sup>65</sup> As we shall see, a case can be made for the claim that it is Alexander, and not Epictetus, who stands behind Cudworth's turn to the notion of some things being 'up to us' (ἐφ' ἡμῖν).

### 3. Echoes of Alexander of Aphrodisias

It has been argued that the origins of the modern metaphysical problem of free will versus determinism, the problem with which Cudworth is concerned, can be found in Alexander's *De fato*, written approximately a century after Epictetus flourished.<sup>66</sup> This is why Epictetus does not really address himself to the free will problem, because it did not exist for him in the way in which we understand it now. Although it is suggested that the foundations for the problem can be found in the *De fato*, Alexander's text is not itself explicitly about free will in the modern sense either.<sup>67</sup> Instead it involves, within the context of a discussion about the nature of fate, a discussion about the nature of deliberation and how we should understand the notion of what is 'up to us'. As we have already seen, this latter notion has different senses for Aristotle, the early Stoic Chrysippus, and the late

---

<sup>65</sup> In particular, Alexander's *De fato*, in *Alexandri Aphrodisiensis praeter commentaria scripta minora: Quaestiones, De fato, De mixtione*, edited by I. Bruns, Supplementum Aristotelicum 2.2 (Berlin: Reimer, 1892), pp. 164–212. For an English translation with commentary, and a facsimile of Brun's text, see R. W. Sharples, *Alexander of Aphrodisias, On Fate* (London: Duckworth, 1983). For a more recent critical edition of the text, with a French translation see P. Thillet, *Alexandre d'Aphrodise, Traité du Destin* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1984). Cudworth mentions Alexander at *A Treatise of Freewill*, ch. 6, p. 170.

<sup>66</sup> See S. Bobzien, 'The Inadvertent Conception and Late Birth of the Free-Will Problem', *Phronesis* 43 (1998), 133–75, at e.g. 136. Others have argued that the problem arose earlier with Epicurus: see e.g. P. Huby, 'The First Discovery of the Freewill Problem', *Philosophy* 42 (1967), 353–62. That view has been attacked in S. Bobzien, 'Did Epicurus Discover the Free Will Problem?', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 19 (2000), 287–337. More recently T. O'Keefe, *Epicurus on Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 154, has suggested that Carneades, inspired by Epicurus, should be credited as the originator. The important point for my concerns here is that Alexander seems to have been the first to use ἐφ' ἡμῖν in a two-sided sense (Epicurus did not use this phrase preferring παρ' ἡμᾶς; see e.g. *Ep. Men.* 133), and, as importantly, that neither Chrysippus nor Epictetus used it in a two-sided sense.

<sup>67</sup> See Bobzien, 'The Inadvertent Conception', 171–2.

Stoic Epictetus, and we have also seen that this is the idea with which Cudworth opens *A Treatise of Freewill*, in the very first line.<sup>68</sup>

There are in Alexander's discussion two senses of what is 'up to us', it has been suggested: a one-sided causative sense and a two-sided potestative sense.<sup>69</sup> The one-sided causative understanding of the phrase is the one we encountered in Chrysippus, namely the idea that what are 'up to us' are those things that we cause to happen, where we play a part in the causal chain.<sup>70</sup> This Alexander characterizes as fate working 'through us' (δι' ἡμῶν).<sup>71</sup> This, the early Stoic view, is the one that Alexander rejects. He writes, 'For, doing away with men's possession of the power of choosing and doing opposites, they say that what is 'up to us' is what comes about through us'.<sup>72</sup> This is also the view that Cudworth rejects in *A Treatise of Freewill*.<sup>73</sup> Cudworth's own understanding of ἐφ' ἡμῶν, operative in his polemic against Stoic determinism, is thus clearly not the same as the early Stoic one-sided causative understanding.

The other sense of ἐφ' ἡμῶν in Alexander is the two-sided potestative understanding. This is the sense of the phrase that Cudworth does use. He describes it as a 'power over ourselves, which infers a contingency or non-necessity' and fleshes this out as 'a power over oneself, either of intending

---

<sup>68</sup> See *A Treatise of Freewill*, ch. 1, p. 155.

<sup>69</sup> See Bobzien, 'The Inadvertent Conception', 139-42; Eliasson, *The Notion of That Which Depends On Us*, 72-9.

<sup>70</sup> See the references in n. 34 above.

<sup>71</sup> See Alexander, *De fato* 181-2 (trans. Sharples, pp. 58-9), esp. 181,14: ἐφ' ἡμῶν εἶναι τὸ γινόμενον καὶ δι' ἡμῶν. In fact, it is not clear whether this is Alexander's gloss on the Stoic position or simply a report of something said by some real Stoic opponent. The same phrase can be found in Nemesius, *De natura hominis* 35 (106,10-13 Morani).

<sup>72</sup> Alexander, *De fato* 181,13-14 (trans. Sharples, p. 58): ἀναιροῦντες γὰρ τὸ ἐξουσίαν ἔχειν τὸν ἄνθρωπον τῆς αἰρέσεώς τε καὶ πράξεως τῶν ἀντικειμένων λέγουσιν ἐφ' ἡμῶν εἶναι τὸ γινόμενον καὶ δι' ἡμῶν.

<sup>73</sup> See e.g. *A Treatise of Freewill*, ch. 18, p. 197.

or remitting and consequently of determining ourselves better or worse'.<sup>74</sup> For Cudworth, then, for something to be 'up to us' it has to be something actively within our power to have changed, rather than merely causally involving our participation. This is the other sense of the phrase that we find in Alexander's *De fato* and it appears to have been introduced by Alexander himself for the very first time.<sup>75</sup> Alexander claims simply to be following Aristotle,<sup>76</sup> but Aristotle did not use the phrase in quite the same sense. For Aristotle, as we have seen, choice is a choice *of* things 'up to us', such as our actions.<sup>77</sup> But choice itself is not presented as something that is 'up to us' as it is later in Epictetus, and then Alexander, and then eventually Cudworth. It is on this very point that Cudworth makes his only reference to Alexander in *A Treatise of Freewill*, where he contrasts Alexander's view with that of unnamed Scholastic philosophers.<sup>78</sup> Cudworth notes that Alexander is of the view that with 'the same things being circumstant, the same impressions being made upon men from without, all that they are passive to being the same, yet they may, notwithstanding, act differently'.<sup>79</sup> So here, Cudworth is following Alexander's understanding of this phrase ἐφ' ἡμῖν, rather than Aristotle, Chrysippus, or Epictetus, for it is in Alexander that we seem for the first time to find this phrase with both the Epictetean shift to a concern with

---

<sup>74</sup> *A Treatise of Freewill*, ch. 18, p. 197 and ch. 14, p. 185 respectively.

<sup>75</sup> See Alexander, *De fato* 181,5-6, with Bobzien, 'The Inadvertent Conception', 143. R. Salles, *The Stoics on Determinism and Compatibilism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 109-10, suggests that a first step towards this position can already be found in Epictetus, but within the context of a concern with moral responsibility rather than freedom of the will. However, Epictetus' Stoic monistic psychology commits him, as it did Chrysippus, to the view that actions necessarily reflect one's character. The alternative view, held by Alexander and Cudworth, involves the claim that agents *can* act against their character. As Bobzien rightly notes (*ibid.*), on the Stoic view there is 'no space for free will (i.e. for a decision making faculty that is causally independent of the mind's individual nature)'.

<sup>76</sup> See Alexander *De fato* 164,13-14: 'The book contains the opinion concerning fate and responsibility held by Aristotle' (trans. Sharples, p. 41).

<sup>77</sup> See n. 47 above.

<sup>78</sup> *A Treatise of Freewill*, ch. 6, p. 170.

<sup>79</sup> *A Treatise of Freewill*, ch. 6, p. 170, and cf. Alexander, *De fato* 185,7-186,3.

choice itself *and* a concern with being able to choose other than we do.<sup>80</sup> Epictetus' use of the phrase is neutral with regard to the metaphysical problem of free will but Alexander's is not. The combination of the use of this phrase with both of these resonances *and* a desire to argue against the Stoic deterministic claim that nothing happens without a cause are features shared by both Alexander's *De fato* and Cudworth's *A Treatise of Freewill*. It is tempting to suggest that Alexander influenced Cudworth far more than Cudworth's one passing reference to Alexander might imply. In the light of what we have seen thus far it looks as if Alexander might be the most plausible source for Cudworth's supposedly Stoic terminology.

There are a number of other parallels between the two works that might add further weight to this suggestion. We have seen that in the opening chapter of *A Treatise of Freewill* Cudworth claims that our natural instincts lead us to praise and blame others for their choices and to feel guilt over some of our own choices. The fact that we are led by nature to do these things Cudworth takes to be strong evidence in support of the claim that it is possible for agents to act other than they do. The same point is made by Alexander in Chapter 12 of *De fato*:

[...] how it is not absurd to say that this mistake [of assuming we do have the power to act otherwise] is one that all men in common have made by nature? For we assume that we have this power in actions, that we can choose the opposite, and not that everything which we choose has causes laid down beforehand, on account of which it is not possible for us not to choose it; this is sufficiently shown also by the regret that often

---

<sup>80</sup> Here I follow Bobzien, 'The Inadvertent Conception'; for some critical comments see Eliasson, *The Notion of That Which Depends On Us*, 76-9. While the Epictetan shift to a concern with choice itself is present in Alexander, there remain some points of difference in how they understand choice, which is unsurprising given Alexander's commitment to Aristotelianism (see Eliasson, *op cit.*, 75-6).

occurs in relation to what has been chosen. For it is on the grounds that it was possible for us also not to have chosen and not to have done this that we feel regret and blame ourselves for our neglect of deliberation. But also when we see others not judging well about the things that they have to do, we reproach them too as going wrong.<sup>81</sup>

As in Cudworth, the fact we all by nature praise and blame and regret is offered as evidence by Alexander for the claim that human action is not completely determined by antecedent causes. A couple of lines later, Alexander adds:

It is clear in itself that ‘what depends on us’ (ἐφ’ ἡμῖν) is applied to those things over which we have the power of also choosing the opposite things.<sup>82</sup>

This is close to the definition of ἐφ’ ἡμῖν that Cudworth uses in the same chapter in which he also discusses praise and blame. He writes:

we are to conclude that there is something ἐφ’ ἡμῖν, in our own power, and that absolute necessity does not reign over all

---

<sup>81</sup> Alexander, *De fato* 180,24-181,3 (trans. Sharples, p. 58): ἦν πλάνην κοινῶς πάντας ἀνθρώπους ὑπὸ τῆς φύσεως πεπλανῆσθαι πῶς οὐκ ἄτοπον λέγειν; ὅτι γὰρ ταύτην ἔχειν τὴν ἐξουσίαν ἐν τοῖς πρακτοῖς προειλήφαμεν, ὡς δύνασθαι διαιρεῖσθαι τὸ ἀντικείμενον, καὶ μὴ πᾶν ὃ αἰρούμεθα ἔχειν προκαταβεβλημένας αἰτίας, δι’ ἃς οὐχ οἶόν τε ἡμᾶς μὴ τοῦτο αἰρεῖσθαι, ἱκανὴ δεῖξαι καὶ ἡ ἐπὶ τοῖς αἰρεθείσιν γινομένη πολλακίς μετάνοια. ὡς γὰρ ἐνὸν ἡμῖν καὶ μὴ ἠρῆσθαι καὶ μὴ πεπραχέναι τοῦτο μετανοοῦμέν τε καὶ μεμφόμεθα αὐτοῖς τῆς περὶ τὴν βουλήν ὀλιγωρίας. ἀλλὰ κἂν ἄλλους ἴδωμεν μὴ καλῶς περὶ τῶν πρακτέων διαλαμβάνοντας, κάκεινοις ἐπικαλοῦμεν ὡς ἀμαρτάνουσιν.

<sup>82</sup> Alexander, *De fato* 181,5-6 (trans. Sharples, p. 58): ἀλλ’ ὅτι μὲν τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν ἐπὶ τούτων κατηγορεῖται, ὧν ἐν ἡμῖν ἡ ἐξουσία τοῦ ἐλέσθαι καὶ τὰ ἀντικείμενα, γνώριμον ὄν καὶ ἐξ αὐτοῦ.

human actions, but that there is something of contingent liberty in them.<sup>83</sup>

I am not arguing for a close textual parallel here but nevertheless it is striking that this use of the ubiquity of praise, blame, and guilt to argue for the existence of the ability to choose otherwise should appear in both works, in addition to the terminological parallels that have already been noted.

Alongside the technical Greek terms that we have already encountered, Cudworth uses another Greek word to refer to the power of self-determination in his account of free will, namely ἀυτεξούσιον.<sup>84</sup> This power over ourselves, residing in the ἡγεμονικόν, is a power ‘either of intending or remitting and consequently of determining ourselves better or worse’ and ‘infers a contingency or non-necessity’.<sup>85</sup> Cudworth identifies this with what is ἐφ’ ἡμῶν, and in making this identification Cudworth again follows Alexander.<sup>86</sup> Both the identification and Cudworth’s explicit definition make clear that he is following Alexander’s understanding of both terms.

It is quite possible, of course, that Cudworth was simply drawing on subsequent discussions from late antiquity, which might display the influence of Alexander, rather than drawing on Alexander directly. One source that has been suggested is Origen.<sup>87</sup> We also know, of course, that

---

<sup>83</sup> *A Treatise of Freewill*, ch. 1, p. 157.

<sup>84</sup> See e.g. *A Treatise of Freewill*, ch. 13, p. 185; ch. 14, p. 185; ch. 18, p. 197.

<sup>85</sup> *A Treatise of Freewill*, ch. 14, p. 185 and ch. 18, p. 197 respectively.

<sup>86</sup> See e.g. Alexander, *De fato* 182,20-24; 189,9-11. Alexander’s use of ἀυτεξούσιον is discussed in Bobzien, ‘The Inadvertent Conception’, 164-7.

<sup>87</sup> See Hutton, p. 155, n. 1: ‘The likely source [...] is the discussion of freewill in Origen’s *Peri Archon*’.

Cudworth was intimately familiar with the work of Plotinus and the subsequent Neoplatonic tradition, which drew on both Alexander and the Stoics in various ways. However, I doubt we could find another text that combines the range of issues and terminology employed by Cudworth as well as Alexander's *De fato* does. It is also hard to imagine someone as well informed about ancient philosophy as Cudworth *not* looking very closely at Alexander's *De fato* when writing about Stoic determinism, given that it is such an important source for the Stoic position.<sup>88</sup>

#### 4. Conclusions

We have seen that Cudworth *claims* to be drawing on a Stoic doctrine of some things being 'up to us', and specifically our own choice being 'up to us', as ammunition against the Stoics' own doctrine of determinism. Although he does not make it explicit, it seems that Cudworth's intention is to try to turn Stoics against Stoics. Such a strategy would come as no surprise to readers of the first part of *The True Intellectual System*, where Cudworth deliberately ranges different forms of atheism against one another, enabling him to claim that 'the kingdom of darkness [is] divided, or labouring with an intestine seditious war in its own bowels, and thereby destroying itself'.<sup>89</sup>

However, we have also seen that this claim does not stand up to close scrutiny. Our opening supposition that Epictetus might be standing behind Cudworth's use of these terms cannot be right. The definitions that Cudworth attaches to the terms that he claims belong to 'Stoical doctrine' do not correspond to what we find in Stoicism, either early or late. The

---

<sup>88</sup> I have already noted that Cudworth mentions Alexander in *A Treatise of Freewill* (ch. 6, p. 170). He also mentions him in *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (pp. 161-2, 170, 240, 667, 715), citing *De fato* explicitly (at 667).

<sup>89</sup> *The True Intellectual System*, 142.

sense in which Cudworth uses ἐφ' ἡμῶν involves the claim that what is 'up to us' includes the ability to choose other than we do, and yet this two-sided potestative sense of the phrase never played a part in Stoicism. Instead we must turn to Alexander to find this two-sided sense. Indeed, that Alexander might stand behind Cudworth's discussion seems highly appropriate given that Alexander's *De fato* might justly be described as the canonical ancient polemic against Stoic determinism. Despite appearances, then, Cudworth does not turn Stoics against Stoics or uncover a tension within Stoicism between determinism and voluntarism. The problem with which Cudworth is so concerned, whether we have the ability to act other than we do, did not yet exist for the Stoics. Cudworth is of course quite right to identify the Stoics *qua* determinists as a target for his polemics, but he must have turned elsewhere for the conceptual resources that he deploys in his fight against them.