

The Philosophy of Moral Response in the Imperial Stoa

by

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Abstract

This dissertation considers the problem of moral responsibility as treated by Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. For them, in contrast to the early Stoics, it has become a question of practical ethics focused on one person's response to the wrongdoing of another. These later Stoics take issue with the Aristotelian and Peripatetic claim that voluntary injustice requires an angry response, which helps to structure Aristotle's theory of rectificatory justice. By distinguishing between the determination of guilt and the determination of the response to the wrongdoer, Seneca shows, against the Peripatetic view, that it is possible to respond adequately to the wrongdoing of others without becoming angry or condoning their misdeeds. Seneca's rejection of the Aristotelian model of retribution leads him to endorse an alternative model of the response to wrongdoing, Socratic in its inspiration, which is based on the correction of the offender. Epictetus, for whom the Stoics' use of the Socratic model is particularly prominent, extends the Stoic framework of interpersonal response by describing external events, including the actions of others, as the materials of the art of living, giving his ethics a participatory, reactive character. He attributes Socrates' patience with others to his insistence on the independence of each person's own mind and the consequent impossibility of

interpersonal harm. His analysis of wrongdoing in terms of the Socratic Paradox offers reasons for suspending anger against wrongdoers, without thereby diminishing their culpability. Marcus Aurelius uses the Stoic concepts of reservation (ὕπεξ αίρεσις) and reversal (περιτροπή) to construct a framework of interpersonal action and reaction. Emphasizing the importance of affection toward human beings, even when they go astray, Marcus calls on himself to correct the wrongdoer's mistakes; in acknowledging the possibility of correction, he acknowledges the wrongdoer's agency, while insisting that a dispassionate reaction to wrongdoing is compatible with meaningful human relationships and with due regard for the rationality and responsibility of the erring agent. It is argued that an interpersonal perspective on responsibility such as these authors adopt is effective in understanding and refining our reactions to the wrongdoing of others as well as the structure of moral responsibility itself.

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It's all my fault! It's all my fault, though I'm not to blame.

That's the point of the whole tragedy.

— Oblonsky in *Anna Karenina*

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Introduction: The Philosophy of Moral Response

The question of how one person should respond to the wrongdoing of another is an important, if often neglected, problem of practical ethics, and also, as this dissertation contends, a crucial issue in the Stoicism of the Roman Imperial period. This problem is distinct from, though related to, what is normally known as the problem of moral responsibility. When one is worried, as the early Stoics very clearly were, about the justness of punishment and moral approval or disapproval in a providentially ordered, deterministic world, the answer is usually taken to turn on the freedom, or at least the attributability, of the actions of the person who is putatively liable to these sanctions. It is crucial, however, that such sanctions are, in the last analysis, the actions of other people responding to what that person has done. Punishment, plainly, is the action of one who punishes, and disapproval is the action, or at least the attitude, of one who disapproves. Even anger and resentment, which people often feel in reaction to what they perceive as someone else's wrongdoing, is best understood alongside punishment and disapproval as one person's response to moral features of his or her interaction with another. These issues rose to prominence in the later Stoa, in the work of authors who took seriously the interpersonal nature of these reactions and shifted their school's focus from the metaphysical problem of determinism and responsibility to the urgent practical problem of moral response.

This dissertation therefore considers a single question as treated by three authors: 'What is the right way to react to another person's wrong action?' Because the authors in question—Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius—are Stoics, they reject the answer put forward by popular morality and Aristotelian philosophy, namely, 'With an appropriate degree of anger.' In consequence, a substantial portion of the present inquiry considers how they answer the charge levelled by their Peripatetic opponents (whose views are described briefly in the first chapter)

that, without anger, we cannot respond adequately to injustice. This study seeks to show that, through a philosophically productive engagement with their school's Socratic heritage, these authors succeed in articulating a workable model of interpersonal moral interaction that eliminates anger without undermining sanctions against wrongdoing. At the same time, it seeks to show how adopting this interpersonal perspective on moral responsibility allowed the later Stoics to develop sophisticated ways of thinking about the wrongdoing of others that also help to illuminate the very structure of moral responsibility.

The choice of these three authors—to whom I shall refer collectively as 'Stoics of the Imperial period' or as 'the Imperial Stoics'—is motivated in part by the idea that they probably form a tradition of readers (though because this is not assured, it is not the basis of any claim in the thesis).¹ They were also close readers of Plato, putting them in a position to translate the influence of his Socratic conversations into their work. Moreover, they are united by the prominence in their work of what I have chosen to call the philosophy of moral response. I use the term 'moral response' for any action or state that is directed toward another person on the basis of a moral evaluation of his or her action or character. This includes responses, not only to negative, but also to positive evaluations of others, such as friendship, honour and gratitude, consideration of which is especially prominent in Seneca's *De Beneficiis*. On the other hand, responses to negative evaluations can include personal reactions such as vengeance, institutional reactions such as punishment, and personal emotional responses such as anger. The philosophy

¹ The designation 'Imperial Stoics' is intended to be temporal, though of course it is true that each of the authors considered here was connected to the Imperial household—as the emperor's adviser, as the slave of his freedman, or as the emperor himself. This fact is sometimes important for how they think about responses to wrongdoing, and that will be discussed in its place. I do not at any point mean to imply that the work of these authors is thoroughly shaped by association with the Roman Empire.

of moral response encompasses reasoned reflections on all of these matters, though the focus of this study is on the treatment of wrong action.

While moral response always involves an evaluation of another person's action or character, it is not identical with that evaluation. Rather, it amounts to the action taken in view of that judgement (where this also includes states entered upon, such as feelings). This makes moral response a question of practical ethics, and a pressing one at that, in view of how often our shared life summons us to answer the actions of others with actions and attitudes of our own. Establishing moral response as a matter of practical ethics helps to distinguish it from the closely related—but nevertheless quite separate—question of moral responsibility. This latter question has a bearing on the evaluation of another's action, but it has nothing to say about the action that should be taken in view of such a judgement. The early Stoics, and especially Chrysippus, had the task of showing that their causal determinism leaves room for the attribution of responsibility to agents. Chrysippus' answer, for all its metaphysical subtlety and logical precision, leaves unanswered the question of just *what* is justified in light of an offender's responsibility, and how.²

² In the treatment of this question by ancient authors, there is a pervasive ambiguity between prescriptions for the reactions of private individuals who have been wronged and prescriptions for the treatment of offenders by the state or the law. In what follows, I generally allow this ambiguity to stand. The distinction between public and private reactions is not rigorously maintained by ancient moral theory, or by Aristotelian and Stoic theory of the law. The victim may, by seeking legal recourse, direct his pursuit of revenge through institutional channels, and insofar as the magistrate determines an appropriate penalty, he is seen as a kind of arbitrator between the victim and the offender. It cannot be right for a victim to pursue an unjust penalty any more than it is right for a magistrate to inflict it, and it seems that ancient authors suppose that a virtuous victim and a virtuous magistrate would both opt to see the same just penalty inflicted on the offender. Beginning with Aristotle, as we shall see, the victim's anger is seen as an important motivating factor even when the offender is punished by the state; consequently, changes in the attitudes held either by victims or by magistrate stand to affect what punishments are carried out and why. There is likewise a long tradition of modern thought (including Joseph Butler, Adam Smith and Peter Strawson) which holds that public assent to the punishment of criminals is supported by sympathy with the resentment felt by victims of crime. (Butler, *Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel* 8.13; Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* 2.1.5.7-11; Strawson, 'Freedom and Resentment', repr. in Michael McKenna and Paul Russel [eds.] *Free Will and Reactive Attitudes: Perspectives on P.F. Strawson's 'Freedom and Resentment'* [Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008], 33-35.) My thanks to Prof. Barney for pressing me on this point.

The importance of moral response to a full understanding of moral responsibility is among the key lessons of Peter Strawson's classic 1962 paper 'Freedom and Resentment', which has proven foundational to much recent work.³ In identifying the 'reactive attitudes' as the factor that, by its absence, makes other compatibilist accounts of the justification of punishment seem unsatisfying, and the problem of freedom and responsibility seem so pressing, Strawson gives a special place to the attitude of resentment, which when generalized underwrites the institution of punishment in a way that mere social utility cannot do.⁴ (33-34) Though Strawson identifies cases in which we may or must suspend our reactive attitudes toward other people, he holds that sustained objectivity of attitude would be impossible for human beings, and that even if it were possible, such suppression of the reactive attitudes would represent a loss to human life.⁵ (27-28) In directing attention away from the problem of freedom and toward the attitudes that we adopt toward other people in relation to their actions, Strawson proposes to reconcile the views of 'optimists' and 'pessimists about determinism' by getting them to acknowledge that no theoretical conviction about the truth of determinism could ever give us a reason to eliminate these reactive attitudes from our lives. The reactive attitude of resentment gives meaning to moral disapproval and to punishment, and it is because even in a determined world this attitude cannot be eliminated that Strawson endorses a modified optimism

³ For an overview of the paper's influence, see the introductory essay by Michael McKenna and Paul Russel to their edited volume, *Free Will and Reactive Attitudes: Perspectives on P.F. Strawson's 'Freedom and Resentment'* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 1-17.

⁴ Peter Strawson, 'Freedom and Resentment', repr. in McKenna and Russell, *Free Will and Reactive Attitudes*, 33-34.

⁵ *ibid.* 27-28.

about the compatibility of determinism with what matters most about the way we look on the actions of other agents.

The Imperial Stoics, compatibilists in the tradition of their school's founders, likewise take an interest in the reactive attitudes, or passions, but famously believe that the passions can and should be eliminated from the moral life of a human being.⁶ Unlike Strawson, they believe that human life is better when anger is removed, along with the other passions—even such anger as might be directed toward those who genuinely do wrong. This view sits well with their belief in determinism, but it does not thereby undermine their compatibilism; it is not because wrongdoers are not responsible that we should not be angry with them, but because anger is the wrong reaction to a wrong action, even when that action is fully attributable to a given agent. With their account of interpersonal attitudes, Socratic in its inspiration, these Stoics are able to offer a coherent and attractive picture of life without the reactive attitude of anger, one that differs from the objectivity of attitude that Strawson envisions, being both attainable for human beings and presenting a gain, not a loss, to human life. For Strawson, objectivity of attitude involves regarding another person as something other than a fully responsible agent⁷; the Stoic attitude, however, involves an acknowledgement of the rationality, and hence the agency, of another person, even when, as often happens, they do wrong because they have assented to false propositions about what is right. The rationality of the wrongdoer gives the Stoic a reason to

⁶ Here I treat the categories of passions and reactive attitudes as interchangeable for my purposes. Strictly speaking, the reactive attitudes are a subset of the passions, since the reactive attitudes are our emotional responses to other people, while emotions can arise in situations that do not involve others. (Thus the fear of being skewered by a falling branch is a passion, but not a reactive attitude, whereas the fear of being skewered by a hostile audience is a reactive attitude, at least in prospect, just as much as it is a passion.)

⁷ Strawson, *op. cit.* 24-25.

regard him with affection, not anger, even when the wrongness of his actions calls for correction.

Aristotle and his Peripatetic followers, to whose views on the passions Strawson's bear marked similarities, offer a dialectical foil for the Stoics in the matter of moral response.⁸ Placing mildness, the right disposition with regard to anger, a little closer to the nameless and uncommon deficiency than to the more widespread excess, Aristotle still takes seriously the possibility that one can be too little disposed to anger. In some situations, for Aristotle, not to become angry can indicate a craven lack of self-regard or a supine reluctance to defend oneself and others. (NE IV.5, EE III.1) This understanding of anger as at once self-assertive and altruistic is Homeric in inspiration, and draws, in all likelihood, on enduring notions of aristocratic and popular morality. The anger felt by victims of injustice also plays a critical role in the account of rectificatory justice in NE V / EE IV, showing how important personal, emotional responses to wrongdoing can be on even a political level, since for Aristotle the satisfaction of a victim's anger through the city's punishment of the offender provides a kind of restitution for injustice done.

A system of justice must countenance certain excuses, however, and Aristotle's extraordinarily influential account of voluntary and involuntary action serves to explain the different ways in which we respond to the actions of others under different circumstances. It is with reference to different ways of responding to what others do that Aristotle explains the need for an account of voluntary action, contrasting the praise and blame incurred by voluntary actions with the forgiveness and even pity directed toward the involuntary (NE III.5). Aristotle

⁸ Revealingly, Strawson even described his own temperament in terms corresponding to the Aristotelian view of anger: 'I am very little, perhaps too little, prone to anger.' (P.F. Strawson, 'Intellectual Autobiography', repr. in *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays* [London: Routledge, 2008], xxxviii.)

(who appears to see himself as correcting the mistaken idea of voluntariness in the Socratic ‘No one does wrong willingly’ paradox) famously defines involuntary action as what is done by compulsion or through ignorance of particulars relevant to the action in question; these cases are the very ones in which, as Strawson shows, we refrain from resentment toward a particular action, since it was a mistake, without suspending wholesale our reactive attitudes toward the offending agent.⁹ It is no matter of controversy that, when an action is straightforwardly beyond someone’s control, we cannot fairly be angry with that person; as Strawson saw, the interest for the philosophy of moral response lies with the actions that do not meet the basic Aristotelian criteria for involuntariness. In such cases, where the act in question really is the act of another person, when and why should our reactive attitudes toward that person be suspended, and what attitudes might be appropriate in their place?

For the early Stoics, however, it was the problem of voluntary action that was most acutely felt because, as determinists, they were under pressure to show that their belief in fate did not entail resignation to events or a complete failure of moral responsibility.¹⁰ Owing, perhaps, to the urgency of this problem, these Stoics seem to have focused on making sense of conventional responses to wrongdoing, since this would show that punishment and moral approval and disapproval can be understood even within a deterministic system (here we may think of Zeno’s slave—fated to steal, and fated to be beaten; DL VII.23 / LS 62E). By contrast, there is little in what remains of the old Stoics to suggest they were seriously interested in the

⁹ Strawson, *op. cit.* 23: ‘To the first group belong all those [special considerations] which might give occasion for the use of such expressions as “He didn’t mean to”, “He hadn’t realized”, “He didn’t know”, and also all those which might give occasion for the use of the phrase “He couldn’t help it”, when this is supported by such phrases as “He was pushed”, “He had to do it”, “It was the only way”, “They left him no alternative” etc.’

¹⁰ The definitive account of Chrysippus’ causal determinism and his style of compatibilism is Susanne Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008).

reform of these responses, in the way this mattered to their successors in the Imperial period; they seem to have cared more about the impersonal notion of responsibility than in the interpersonal model of moral response.¹¹ Given the state of our sources, this could simply be a matter of missing evidence, though I suspect that is not the case; it is certainly remarkable that in our abundant evidence for the thought of Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, we encounter the problem of freedom and determinism relatively seldomly. This leaves the impression that they considered the matter settled, but felt the need to accommodate this compatibilist view of action to the school's rejection of the reactive attitudes, by showing that, even though wrongdoing can meet the conditions of voluntariness and attributability, there is still no reason to be angry with the wrongdoer. Moreover, I cannot think of any place where an Imperial Stoic, in defending his view of the proper response to wrongdoing, appeals to Zeno or Chrysippus for support. Rather it seems that, perhaps in answer to Peripatetic challenges to Stoic views on the emotions, Imperial Stoics had to formulate their own view of the proper response to wrongdoing which would avoid the charges Aristotle makes against the 'angerless' disposition.

Seeking a resource within their tradition with which to formulate their own model of the proper response to wrongdoing, and finding little help from the founders of their school, later Stoics turn instead to Socrates, who famously foreswore anger even in the moment of his condemnation, and whose calm, patient engagement with his trying antagonists stands out in

¹¹ So focused were the early Stoics on the question of moral responsibility that no less an interpreter than Bobzien can slip into claiming that 'Stoic ethics would require Chrysippus to accept' the premise that 'getting angry about [errors and misdeeds] and legal punishment are just(ified).' (244) This is in the course of reconstructing an argument based on Gellius *NA* 7.2.5, where the point is that for Chrysippus anger and punishment are not made unjust by determinism; what is overlooked is that Stoics consider anger unjust for other reasons, even though responsibility is preserved. I suspect that the casual inclusion of anger in this argument is owed to Gellius in any case, rather than to Chrysippus himself.

several Platonic dialogues, and also in the work of Xenophon. One passage from Epictetus, which has been given its due emphasis by A. A. Long, explicitly acknowledges this move:

The honourable and good man neither fights with anyone himself, nor, so far as he can, does he let anyone else do so. Of this as of everything the life of Socrates is available to us as a model, who not only himself avoided fighting everywhere, but did not let others fight. Notice in Xenophon's *Symposium* how many fights he has resolved, and again how he put up with Thrasymachus, Polus and Callicles ... For he kept utterly secure in mind the thought that no one controls another's commanding-faculty (*hegemonikon*). (*Discourses* IV.5.1-4)¹²

Taking up the Socratic claim that no one can harm a good man and presenting it, in their school's way, as the denial that anything but virtue is good, the Imperial Stoics place renewed emphasis on the consequence (expressed memorably at *Apology* 41d) that there is no need for anger toward those who can do no harm. Stoics also take up the famous claim that no one does wrong willingly (the very paradox that Aristotle's account of voluntariness was formulated to solve), but they do not interpret it as being at odds with the compatibilism of their school, as it might be if it were understood to deny that any wrong action is ever free or voluntary. Rather, they understand the Socratic Paradox as offering a reason to refrain from anger toward a misguided offender, and in a fully Socratic vein turn instead to the correction of the wrongdoer. Similarly Socratic is the emphasis of these philosophers on their own limitations and imperfections, and those of others who must react to the wrongdoing they encounter; this promotes humility in judgement along with the realization, especially prominent in Marcus Aurelius, that one's own actions and reactions are undertaken with limited knowledge both of the history of others' actions and of the future success or failure of one's own. All told, the promise of the Socratic example is that it offers a model for a meaningful engagement with those who go wrong, which eschews anger without any loss of moral vigour.

¹² A.A. Long, 'Socrates in Hellenistic Philosophy', in *Stoic Studies* (Cambridge 1996, repr. Berkeley 2001), 1-2. Long uses the same passage to begin his chapter on 'The Socratic Paradigm' in *Epictetus: A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life*.

As far as our sources can inform us, it is with Seneca that anger first becomes central to the Stoic-Peripatetic debate over the emotions. On the evidence of his *De Ira*, it appears that the Peripatetic endorsement of moderate anger would have been readily accepted by many members of the Roman elite (just as Aristotle would have seen himself as showing due regard for common belief in setting out his own view of mildness) and so the Peripatetics may have seen the opportunity to exploit what could have seemed to many philosophically interested readers as a weakness in the Stoic view of the emotions. Though Seneca's citations of Aristotle can seldom be shown to refer to known works, it is fairly clear that his Peripatetic opponents, whoever they are, hold positions firmly built on those of their school's founders. In both the *De Ira* and the *De Clementia*, Seneca disputes the notion that anger follows in any way from a due regard for justice and self-worth. He disputes the claim that an angry response is necessary to address the wrongdoing of another person and stresses, against the Aristotelian position, that anger should have no role whatever in the administration of justice. This rejection of the Aristotelian model of punishment leads him to endorse the alternative, Socratic/Platonic model based on the correction of the offender. To advance this model on the political level, Seneca focusses on the kind of character that is suited to the administration of justice, one that is not only free from anger, but also marked by positive other-oriented dispositions.

Epictetus, who also considers the right way of regarding wrongdoers (though he stresses the personal rather than the political side of the matter), promotes peaceful and productive relationships among agents by emphasizing the radical independence of each agent's decision-making power. In the passage cited above, which makes clear his deliberate use of the Socratic model, Epictetus attributes Socrates' patience with others to his realization that no person controls another's *hegemonikon*; this interpretation reflects Socrates' confidence, as indeed

evidenced in Plato's dialogues, that no one can change his mind by sheer insistence or by majority rule. For Epictetus, only what lies in our power can be good or bad, and the control of our own beliefs and decisions falls, for him as for his Socrates, inalienably within our power. This puts all that matters beyond the reach of anyone who might seek to harm us, leaving only the offender himself exposed to harm. By this Socratic path, Epictetus arrives at the dictum, later taken up by Marcus Aurelius, that it is impossible that one man goes wrong, while another man suffers the consequences. (I.28.10) His analysis of wrongdoing is in terms of the Socratic Paradox, which he puts forward as a reason for suspending anger against wrongdoers; it is not meant to show that the wrongdoer's action was involuntary (even though, with the values he had, it was inevitable), but only that punishment for the action lies in the very deed itself, and this is precisely because the wrongdoing is something within the offender's power. He chastises the cruelty of those who call angrily for the punishment of people who really need correction (I.18.5); just like Plato's Socrates, Epictetus holds that pity is a far more appropriate than anger as a response to someone who is deceived about the most important things, though like Seneca he qualifies by asserting that pity, itself a passion, also goes against nature. For someone other than the wrongdoer, the act was among the things not up to him, and so he has no cause for anger; in fact, Epictetus emphasizes that someone who becomes angry with another person makes himself just as bad as the wrongdoer, since that anger turns on a valuation of whatever thing the wrongdoer valued so highly that he chose to commit a crime. (I.18.12-13) By limiting our desires to what falls within the scope of our own agency, however, we can escape this sort of conflict. The actions of others are not in our power, but our reactions are, and what we ought to value, for Epictetus, is the fact of acting and reacting rightly in our dealings with them.

Marcus Aurelius, whose enthusiasm for the work of Epictetus is beyond doubt, and who was likely also a reader of Seneca, returns again and again to the question of how he should respond to the wrongdoing of others; the constant presence of this theme in his philosophical notebooks is a sure testament to how much this question must have meant to Marcus. He retains a fully Epictetan view of the independence of moral choice, as well as a Senecan consciousness of the political importance of the right approach to wrongdoers, especially for someone in his position. It is perhaps clearer in Marcus' work than in any other author that the Stoic attitude to wrongdoers involves an engagement with others that is far richer than what Strawson envisions for the objective attitude. Using the elusive Stoic notions of reservation and reversal, Marcus constructs (or perhaps preserves) a framework of action and reaction that allows him to conceptualize his own activity in a world where other agents are likely to obstruct it, along with a mechanism for redirecting his activity in response to their actions. Emphasizing the importance of affection toward human beings, even when they go astray, Marcus calls on himself to correct the mistakes of those who go wrong; in acknowledging the possibility of correction, he also acknowledges the wrongdoer's agency, while in promoting an affectionate response, he makes clear that a dispassionate reaction to wrongdoing is compatible with meaningful human relationships and a strong sense of fellow-feeling.

There are, in my view, several merits to adopting an interpersonal perspective on the problem of moral responsibility, which could surely have made this approach attractive to Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, and by which it earns our serious consideration as well. From the standpoint of practical ethics, the interpersonal perspective helps us to reach action-guiding conclusions about how we should treat others, which the impersonal question of moral responsibility leaves undetermined. There are, moreover, many situations in which we cannot

adequately assess another person's responsibility for his or her actions; these concerns are not limited to serious offences, or cases wherein a court of law might endeavour to assess someone's responsibility for a crime, but even the petty offences of everyday life, which often arise without our having a chance to evaluate all the reasons behind the action that annoys us. In such cases, the question of responsibility may be unanswerable, but the question of response still requires an answer. In such cases, it is often more productive to focus on our own attitudes than to persist in a default attitude of resentment until another person can satisfy us with an excuse. This hardly means that we must always act toward others in a single, constant way, without differentiating for their behaviour; the sensitive interpersonal dispositions that these Stoics describe readily permit the modification of one's own courses of action in response to what others do. The goal of this study is to show that an interpersonal perspective on moral responsibility is effective in understanding and refining our reactions to the wrongdoing of others as well as the structure of moral responsibility itself. This I take to be true whether one endorses something like the Stoic view or, on the other hand, the view of the Peripatetics or of latter-day Aristotelians like Strawson. The merits of the view held by Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius are not easily dismissed, however, and by exploring it in detail I hope to draw attention to the richness of their contribution and of the moral attitudes to wrongdoing that are possible when anger is eliminated.

Aristotle and Theophrastus: Anger, Blame and Settling the Score

Aristotle and the Stoics agree that human beings, though fundamentally oriented toward what is good, frequently go wrong and do wrong. In both cases, then, there naturally arises the question of how a good person will respond to the wrongdoing of others, and on this there is little agreement between Stoics and Aristotelians. In particular, they are at odds over whether the good person will ever become angry, either when he is the victim or the witness of another's injustice. A great deal of ancient evidence links the followers of Aristotle with the view that anger, properly moderated, is the appropriate way to respond to another person's wrongdoing. Seneca's *De Ira* treats the Peripatetics as the principal opponents of the Stoic rejection of anger, and Cicero's *Tusculanae Disputationes* foregrounds anger (4.43) in its account of the Peripatetic defence of the emotions; already with the *Magna Moralia*, a Peripatetic author goes so far as to identify virtue as a moderate degree of passion. But in Aristotle's own ethical works, neither passion in general nor anger in particular had the prominence it was to acquire in the course of debate with the Stoics. There is some evidence, however, that Aristotle did see an important role for anger in the life of a virtuous human being, and, consequently, that the Peripatetics were not mistaken in developing their Aristotelian account of anger on the basis of their master's work, nor their Stoic opponents far off the mark in targeting *Aristoteles defensor irae* (Seneca, *De Ira* 3.3.1).¹

¹ One argument in favour of anger that is prominently attributed to Aristotle in Seneca's *De Ira* (1.9.2, 1.13.3) is however not to be found in his work, namely the claim that anger is useful insofar as it makes people more courageous. The argument appears to have been popular with later Peripatetics, but Aristotle himself rejects the idea that people are braver when they are angry, on the grounds that angry fighters are motivated not by what is noble, but by the pleasure at which their passion aims. (NE 1117a5-9) On the Academic Crantor as the originator of the 'Whetstone of Courage' argument, see Brad Inwood, *Ethics After Aristotle*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2014), 91, 98-101.

Scholarly discussion of Aristotle's philosophy of emotion has tended to focus on the *Rhetoric*, though with its emphasis on techniques of persuasion, its bearing on the ethics of anger is controversial.² Without neglecting Aristotle's account in this text, we begin elsewhere: it is in his account of mildness in NE IV.5 that Aristotle most clearly addresses the question of when and why anger is appropriate. In describing mildness as an intermediate disposition, Aristotle opposes it both to the excessive tendency to anger, which is irascibility (ὀργυλότης), and to a deficiency in anger, which, rather tentatively, he terms angerlessness (ἀοργησία):

ἢ δ' ἔλλειψις, εἴτ' ἀοργησία τίς ἐστὶν εἴθ' ὅ τι δὴ ποτε, ψέγεται. οἱ γὰρ μὴ ὀργιζόμενοι ἐφ' οἷς δεῖ ἡλίθιοι δοκοῦσιν εἶναι, καὶ οἱ μὴ ὥς δεῖ μὴδ' ὅτε μὴδ' οἷς δεῖ· δοκεῖ γὰρ οὐκ αἰσθάνεσθαι οὐδὲ λυπεῖσθαι, μὴ ὀργιζόμενός τε οὐκ εἶναι ἀμυντικός, τὸ δὲ προπηλικάζόμενον ἀνέχεσθαι καὶ τοὺς οἰκείους περιορᾶν ἀνδραποδῶδες.

The deficiency, whether 'angerlessness' or what have you, is blamed. For those who do not become angry over the things one ought are considered foolish, as are those who do not do so as one ought or at those whom one ought. For if a person does not become angry he is considered insensible and dull to pain, and not to be the warding-off sort, and to forbear when one is treated foully – or to stand around when it happens to those close to him – is slavish. (1126a3-8)³

The fact that Aristotle treats total freedom from anger as a vice entails that he must believe that anger has some place in the moral and emotional life of a virtuous person. But rather than mounting a positive defence of anger to justify its ethical standing, Aristotle argues by observing what he takes to be the failings of a character that lacks it, and this feature of the Peripatetic account of anger appears to characterize most of the subsequent debate. In order to

² The leading proponent of the *Rhetoric*-based approach is David Konstan, whose important contributions are discussed below. In his review of Konstan's *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), Robert Kaster rightly cautions that 'In one sense, to be sure, Aristotle writes for a very narrow purpose: to influence the judgements of people listening to forensic or deliberative oratory,' but sympathetically notes that 'for that purpose to be realized, his analyses must connect with the lives that the notional jurymen and council members led beyond the courtroom and the assembly.' (NDPR 2006.09.05) This is right as far as it goes, but as there is little that is *prescriptive* in Aristotle's description of these emotions, their bearing on moral philosophy remains fairly oblique.

³ Similarly, at 1109b114-18, Aristotle uses mildness as an example of how difficult it can be to hit the mean in any given situations, referring to both an excess and a deficiency with regard to anger. The Nicomachean account of angerlessness is closely paralleled at EE 1231b8-13, where the angerless person is also called 'slavish'.

see why Aristotle thinks anger is so important, we may consider each of his reasons for objecting to its complete absence.⁴ The first of these—namely that the person who never responds with anger ‘seems to be insensible and indolent’—indicates a lack of natural human feeling akin to the ἀναισθησία described at 1104a24, only directed to pains instead of pleasures. Aristotle probably thinks it is due to this want of feeling that the angerless person is not such as to ward off attack. This word, ἀμυντικός, is also used at *History of Animals* 488b8 and *Parts of Animals* 683a21 to describe the defensive capacities of organisms generally, and in the former place it is explained by a contrast with capacities that are merely protective and not retaliatory:

Further, some are such as to ward off attack (ἀμυντικά), and some are such as to guard against it (φυλακτικά): those that are such as to ward off attack are the ones that either act the aggressor (ἐπιτίθεται) or fight back when they are wronged (ἀδικούμενα ἀμύνετια), whereas those of the guarding sort are the ones that have in themselves some shelter to keep them from suffering harm. (HA 488b8-10)

Given that for Aristotle, non-humans cannot properly be said to do right or wrong to each other, he must be using the word ἀδικούμενα in this passage in a rather more general sense than it has in the ethical and political works. In the human case, however, to be wronged is not just to be attacked, but to be subject to injustice, and this expands the meaning of self-defense into the moral sphere. When Aristotle claims that the good person should not fail to be ἀμυντικός, it is

⁴ Though Aristotle’s description of angerlessness really is very short – certainly in relation to the importance of anger for later debates, and even in relation to the account of mildness as a whole – we may still take it as an authoritative account of why anger is sometimes necessary, and certainly as more than an offhand comment. After all, it is part of Aristotle’s systematic enumeration of virtues and vices, and there is no need to take this as dialectical or endoxic, or anything but seriously meant. It also cannot be the case that Aristotle is simply inventing the vice of angerlessness to fill a schematic void in the description of mildness: since his ethics allows for acts that are wrong no matter when or to what degree they are performed, if Aristotle had wanted to claim that the most perfect mildness is the complete absence of anger, he would have felt no theoretical pressure preventing him from doing just that (see EE 1221b18-26). In fact, it is easy enough to explain why Aristotle has comparatively little to say here about why we need sometimes to be angry, since he finds the excess with regard to anger to be much more common than the deficiency, and so he takes irascibility to be more opposed to the mean than angerlessness: ‘And we take the extreme to be more opposed to mildness; after all, it occurs more often. For taking revenge is the more human thing, and difficult people are the worse when it comes to living together.’ (1126a29-31) Of course, it is quite natural that Aristotle should spend much more time giving his account of the more widespread human failing, just as he gives a much longer account of indiscipline than he does of insensibility to pleasure (see 1108b35-1109a5, 1119a5-11).

natural to expect something in common between this description and the application of this word to the non-human cases, and so we can plausibly take it that he understands anger as a natural endowment for the purpose of self-defense, much like the retaliatory capacities of other animals. What in another animal is aimed merely at self-preservation must in a human being become that by which we are inclined to resist injustice, or at least that injustice which is involved in assaults against our person. At its most basic level, then, anger is a response to undeserved harm from outside, and it causes us not just to defend ourselves, but to retaliate.

Aristotle also condemns the angerless person because it is ‘slavish’ to forebear when either one oneself or somebody close is treated foully (literally, ‘splashed with mud’), so that anger matters in a social, and not just in a biological way. At NE 1133a1, the inability to return ill for ill is compared to slavery, whereas at 1104a24, rustics (οἱ ἄγροικοί) are called ἀναίσθητοι because they avoid every pleasure: we may reasonably think that, for Aristotle, insensibility to pain is to slaves as insensibility to pleasure is to rustics. Aristotle must take it that what the angerless person fails to do is to assert his own worth – that of a rational, free and respectable citizen – by responding angrily to an insult or another kind of ill treatment. Naturally, both insults and bodily harm may be construed together as the unmerited deprivation of some good, and this will soon be relevant to our discussion; for now, at least, it is clear that anger is an other-directed response to some kind of assault from without.

The passage we have been discussing makes it clear that, for Aristotle, a good person must sometimes become angry—over the right things, in the right way, and with the right people (and also for the right extent of time, as he adds at 1109b15-16). It is not perfectly clear from this passage, however, what sorts of situations Aristotle believes call for anger. The considerations we have just seen offer some indication: anger is connected with self-defence—

but against what?—and it responds to treatment that is somehow disrespectful or offensive—but how? In what follows I shall argue that anger is a response to the action of another agent that affects the agent who becomes angry, or else someone close to her or him—and not merely harmful or offensive action, but action that is *wrong*. That this has not been widely recognized is due to the emphasis placed on the *Rhetoric*, which offers Aristotle’s longest treatment of anger.⁵ The *Rhetoric* is, however, a peculiar kind of work, and its treatment of the emotions differs significantly in purpose from Aristotle’s ethical works as well as from later discussions of emotion. Far from inquiring whether the passions, either individually or as a whole, are ever morally appropriate—a question that would be a central locus of debate between Stoics and Peripatetics—it is not even concerned with when one ought normally to experience them. Its account of the emotions is descriptive rather than prescriptive, and this description is put at the service of rhetorical persuasion. The scope of Aristotle’s treatment in the *Rhetoric* is therefore limited by the conditions that govern oratorical practice: he is less concerned with interpersonal emotional reactions than with large-scale social affect. For all the subtlety with which Aristotle treats the subject-matter of the *Rhetoric*, and for all the importance of this treatment to the later study of rhetoric, the *Rhetoric*’s extended discussion of anger appears to be further from the core the Peripatetic philosophy of anger than the shorter account in the *Ethics*.

With these cautions in mind, it is nonetheless important not to ignore the *Rhetoric*’s descriptive account of anger. In particular, the earlier part of this account, which offers a sort of analytic framework for the discussion of anger, helps to identify the kinds of actions to which

⁵ But see Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009, new ed.), 95-96 and Charles Griswold, *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 6-7, 18-19, for treatments which, though they do not deal directly with the issue, avoid the confusion that results from treating anger exclusively in relation to slights. Konstan (‘Aristotle on Anger and the Emotions: The Strategies of Status’, in Susanna Braund and Glenn Most, eds., *Ancient Anger: Perspectives from Homer to Galen*, 99-120 [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003], 100) issues appropriate cautions, but still relies heavily on the *Rhetoric*, as we shall see.

anger responds. At first glance, the definition that opens the *Rhetoric*'s account would seem to provide a comprehensive answer:

ἔστω δὴ ὀργὴ ὄρεξις μετὰ λύπης τιμωρίας φαινομένης διὰ φαινομένην ὀλιγωρίαν τῶν εἰς αὐτὸν ἢ τῶν αὐτοῦ, τοῦ ὀλιγωρεῖν μὴ προσήκοντος. (1378a31-33)

Let anger be a desire, accompanied by pain, for apparent revenge on account of an apparent slight against oneself or one's own, where slighting is uncalled for.⁶

This definition of anger has led David Konstan to argue, in several prominent and extremely valuable contributions to the study of Aristotle on emotion, that Aristotle thinks of anger as responding exclusively to slights, understanding this to mean that anger is not a response to injustice generally speaking.⁷ This, however, is to put too much emphasis on a narrow reading of the *Rhetoric*'s definition. Aristotle seems rather to construe slighting so broadly that it actually describes injustice as a whole. To slight someone is to act toward them on the view that they are worthless (μηδενὸς ἄξιος), and Aristotle lays out three kinds of slighting, namely καταφρόνησις (disdain), ἐπεαρασμός (spiteful treatment) and ὕβρις (wanton violence). Even if καταφρόνησις is simply having the thought that someone is worthless, ἐπεαρασμός and ὕβρις involve acting toward another person with blatant disregard. In each case, though perhaps to differing degrees, one can be said to wrong the person one slights. A notion of slighting that includes not only disdain for another person's worth, but also also spiteful obstruction of

⁶ I take it that the expression 'apparent revenge' (τιμωρίας φαινομένης) allows for the possibility that one might seek revenge that is not appropriate, and so is not really revenge, but some other kind of harm beyond what might properly be exacted in revenge. Of course, if the slight is not real but only apparent – which is plainly possible – then any retaliatory action would fail to be revenge because the score just doesn't need settling. There also appears to be a half-explicit exclusion in Aristotle's definition for those who really are worthless—hence the specification 'τοῦ ὀλιγωρεῖν μὴ προσήκοντος'.

⁷ Konstan even registers surprise that Aristotle should think of anger in this way ('Aristotle on Anger and the Emotions', 103): 'That anger should, for Aristotle, arise specifically and indeed exclusively from a slight, rather than from other kinds of deliberate harm that another person might inflict, is remarkable...' Cf. Konstan, *Before Forgiveness: The Origins of a Moral Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 26.

another's projects, as well as deliberately humiliating violence, is ultimately so inclusive as to temper the apparent exclusivity of Aristotle definition of anger.⁸

The notion of personal worth provides an important link with the third text that holds special importance for understanding Aristotle's thinking about anger, which is his book on justice (NE V / EE IV). There Aristotle directly connects personal worth to the goods one ought to receive, and differences on this score are said to be the basic source of 'quarrels and accusations'.⁹ Anger arises when an allegedly unfair estimation of a person's worth motivates an unfair distribution of goods. This way of describing justice helps to confirm the argument I have been advancing that the 'slights' to which anger responds in the *Rhetoric* are really best construed as instances of injustice. Because justice, for Aristotle, is a matter of giving each person his due—that is to say, of treating him as he deserves—to slight someone by treating him as worth nothing simply is to treat him unjustly.¹⁰ Hence it is that in the book on justice, Aristotle describes anger as a response to apparent injustice (1135b28-29). In fact, though anger receives little in the way of explicit emphasis in this book, it occupies an important place in Aristotle's thought about appropriate reactions to wrongdoing, as shown by the crucial role it plays in his account of rectificatory justice.

⁸ Moreover, a forward-looking reference earlier in the *Rhetoric* provides further evidence that Aristotle takes anger to respond to wrongdoing, since Aristotle places it in the midst of a discussion of what it is to be wronged. (1373b36-37)

⁹ Both the *Rhetoric* and the justice book see conflict through the lens of the *Iliad*. In the *Rhetoric*, this is reflected in Aristotle's especially frequent use of Homeric quotations to illustrate his points during this discussion, as at 1378b6-7, 32, 33, 79a5, 6 & 80b29 where he quotes from the *Iliad* (for a total of six distinct quotations), and at 1380b23, where he quotes from the *Odyssey*.

¹⁰ There are probably two reasons why honour is so prominent in Aristotle's thinking about anger, aside from its general valuation in a world that inherited the *Iliad* as a foundational text. From an ethical perspective, Aristotle takes honour to be a particularly important external good (see EN 1123a21-2, 35). From the perspective of the *Rhetoric*, matters of honour provide the most promising avenue for convincing groups of people they have been wronged, since when individuals have been robbed, assaulted, or violently harmed, there is usually no need to persuade them to be angry.

Aristotle's account of rectificatory justice functions as a kind of complement to his account of distributive justice: that is, the former exists to correct failures in the latter. In order to provide a comprehensive account of justice, Aristotle opts to treat even cases of assault and murder on the model of unjust distribution. Though he admits that his characterization is somewhat counter-intuitive, he maintains that even these cases may be construed as a gain to the perpetrator as well as a loss to the victim. (1132a6-19)¹¹ It is natural enough, of course, to construe the harm to a victim as the loss of some good, such as health or pleasure, and the gain to the assailant may be seen as one of honour or status, or simply of whatever seeming good he sought in carrying out his act. Consequently, it is the judge's task to correct an unfair distribution by taking something from the offender and giving something to the victim. The judge will restore equality in the way that he would correct the unequal division of a line, by taking enough from the larger segment to make the two segments equal when it is added to the shorter one. (1132b2-9) We can imagine how a judge might take away the gain that has accrued to the perpetrator of a crime, since he will have punishment at his disposal to make sure that crime does not pay in the final accounting. Aristotle also makes it clear, however, that to satisfy the demands of rectificatory justice, what is taken from the criminal must come as a gain to the victim; this is more difficult to understand, given that Aristotle's account would leave many crimes unaddressed if he had only financial restitution in mind. In some cases, such as those involving theft, the proceeds of crime can straightforwardly be taken from the offender and restored to the victim, but in many others, including most cases of violent crime, this simply cannot be done.¹² In these cases, the victim's desire for revenge plays a crucial role in

¹¹ cf. 1134a12-13: τοῦ δὲ ἀδικήματος τὸ μὲν ἔλαττον ἀδικεῖσθαι ἐστίν, τὸ δὲ μείζον τὸ ἀδικεῖν.

¹² At 1131a6-10, Aristotle includes adultery, poisoning, torture, wounding, and abusive language (προπηλακισμός, as at 1126a7) among the 'involuntary transactions' governed by rectificatory justice.

completing Aristotle's account: in punishing the offender, the judge grants satisfaction to the victim's anger, so that the pleasure he receives when the criminal suffers is the pleasure that accompanies the satisfaction of this desire.¹³

Anger is characterized as a desire for revenge in the *Rhetoric*'s definition, and this is supported in some places by the *Ethics*. Like other kinds of desire, anger is painful, but sometimes thoughts of fulfilling it bring pleasure. The angry person feels pleasure when his revenge is finally brought about, as Aristotle also remarks at EN 1126a21-22 and 1117a5.

Looking to the account of pleasure in EE VI / NE VII, we see Aristotle contrast the pleasure that accompanies the satisfaction of an appetite, which he considers to be incidentally pleasant, with activities that are pleasant without qualification.

ἔτι ἐπεὶ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ τὸ μὲν ἐνέργεια τὸ δ' ἔξις, κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς αἱ καθιστᾶσαι εἰς τὴν φυσικὴν ἔξιν ἡδειαί εἰσιν. ἔστι δ' ἡ ἐνέργεια ἐν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις τῆς ὑπολοίπου ἔξεως καὶ φύσεως, ἐπεὶ καὶ ἄνευ λύπης καὶ ἐπιθυμίας εἰσιν ἡδοναί, οἷον αἱ τοῦ θεωρεῖν, τῆς φύσεως οὐκ ἐνδεοῦς οὔσης. σημεῖον δ' ὅτι οὐ τῷ αὐτῷ ἡδεῖ χαίρουσιν ἀναπληρουμένης τε τῆς φύσεως καὶ καθεστηκυίας, ἀλλὰ καθεστηκυίας μὲν τοῖς ἀπλῶς ἡδέσιν, ἀναπληρουμένης δὲ καὶ τοῖς ἐναντίοις. (1152b33-53a4)

Furthermore, since the good consists either of an activity or a state, those processes which restore us to a natural state are incidentally pleasant. In the case of appetites, since there are pleasures that do not accompany pain and appetite, such as the activities of contemplation, when one's nature is not at all in need. An indication of this is that people do not experience the same pleasure when their natural state is being replenished as when it has been restored; rather, when it has been restored they experience what is pleasant without qualification, whereas when it is being replenished they even experience the opposite sort[.] (Trans. Inwood and Woolf)

In the context of this passage, Aristotle is responding to an opponent who has identified pleasure with a kind of *genesis*, or coming-to-be, since it accompanies an individual's restoration to a complete state. For Aristotle, some pleasures do indeed operate in this way, but they differ from the pleasures that are felt by someone who is already in a complete state – that is, those that

¹³ Anger, unlike hatred, requires that one be the agent of revenge, but the victim may reasonably be seen as exacting a penalty obtained in a case he has prosecuted.

accompany the natural state's unimpeded activity (1153a14-15). The pleasures associated with coming-to-be are pleasant just to this or that person, in her or his particular condition – for instance, she might be sick or hungry – whereas the others are pleasant without qualification.

We cannot but regard the pleasure arising from revenge as belonging to the group of pleasures that are associated with coming-to-be, since it arises from the satisfaction of an appetite which exists in the individual on account of his having been wronged, and not from the kind of activity to which nothing can be added; anger is much more like hunger, or even erotic desire, than it is like contemplation. If we understand it in this way, we see how the pleasure involved in anger can be mixed with pain, as in the *Rhetoric's* definition of anger, and how it is different from the purer pleasure that accompanies contemplation and other unimpeded activity. It also explains how someone who would not normally enjoy inflicting pain on another person can enjoy it because he is angry, and it reminds us that an angry person is not in his proper state, as a result of the injury that has been inflicted on him. For Aristotle, the operation of justice returns both parties to injustice, the victim and the offender, to their proper state through the pain that is inflicted on the criminal—he because his unjust profit is lost, and his victim because the natural desire that was created in him at the time of the offence has been fulfilled. The judge effects the work of justice by pursuing vengeance on the victim's behalf, and in granting him the satisfaction he desires, he settles the score between him and the offender, and provides for the just distribution of goods that was ruined by the crime. In this way, the anger the victim feels, which gives him an appetite for the offender's suffering, plays a crucial role in motivating Aristotle's justification of punishment.

It is worth noting that Aristotle takes some degree of anger to be practically automatic as a response to the appearance of wrongdoing, to the extent that actions that might otherwise be

unjust can not only be justified when they are part of an angry response to wrongdoing, but even attributed to the person who caused the provocation:

διὸ καλῶς τὰ ἐκ θυμοῦ οὐκ ἐκ προνοίας κρίνεται· οὐ γὰρ ἄρχει ὁ θυμῷ ποιῶν, ἀλλ' ὁ ὀργίσας. ἔτι δὲ οὐδὲ περὶ τοῦ γενέσθαι ἢ μὴ ἀμφιβητεῖται, ἀλλὰ περὶ τοῦ δικαίου· ἐπὶ φαινομένη γὰρ ἀδικία ἡ ὀργή ἐστιν. (1135b25-29)

This is why it is right that what is done out of anger is not judged as being done by premeditation. For the person who acts in anger does not start it, but the person who made him angry. Moreover, whether it took place or not is not contested, but whether it was just; for anger is a response to apparent injustice.

When one person has harmed another because he was angry, the question is only of whether his anger was just, and Aristotle takes this to depend on the truth of the appearance of wrongdoing.¹⁴ If the object of the other's anger has in fact treated that person unjustly, then the harm done was rightly incurred by the offending agent. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle says that to act injuriously toward someone who has previously done one wrong hardly appears to be wrongdoing at all, but rather that it has something pleasant and honourable in it. (1373a13-15) Moreover, he holds it necessary that an affront which one recognizes as retaliation for one's own unjust treatment of another does not arouse anger as the same action otherwise would.

¹⁴ If, as I have been arguing, Aristotle understands anger as a response not only to insults, but to injustice, acknowledging this has the benefit of closing the gap between his accounts of anger and of hatred. The narrow construal of anger has led David Konstan and William Fortenbaugh to argue that Aristotle distinguishes sharply between anger and hatred by taking hatred to respond to wrongdoing, and anger only to slights. (Konstan, 'Aristotle on Anger and the Emotions', 109-110, Fortenbaugh, *Aristotle on Emotions: A Contribution to Philosophical Psychology, Rhetoric, Poetics, Politics and Ethics* [London: Duckworth, 2002, 2nd ed.], 105-107.) But Aristotle describes anger as a 'part of hatred' (μόριον δέ τι τοῦ μισοῦς καὶ τὴν ὀργὴν δεῖ τιθέσθαι, *Politics* 1312b25-26). We can make sense of this by admitting that both emotions respond to injustice, and by distinguishing anger through its more closely interpersonal orientation. Hatred in general, like anger in particular, involves desiring that another person suffer harm on account of wrong they have done, but the victim of the hated person's wrongdoing may have been anyone at all, and the one who hates only desires that harm should come to the wrongdoer, without experiencing any particular desire to be its agent; the angry person, by contrast, is distinguished by his desire that he himself be the agent of harm to someone who has harmed either him or someone close to him. It is for this reason that anger must be oriented toward a particular person, whereas hatred in general can be directed toward entire groups of people under a given description. (Thieves and sycophants are Aristotle's examples, *Rhetoric* 1382a5-6.) Anger is therefore distinguished from hatred by its closely interpersonal quality. (ὀργὴ μὲν οὖν ἐστὶν ἐκ τῶν πρὸς αὐτόν, ἔχθρα δὲ καὶ ἄνευ τοῦ πρὸς αὐτόν. *Rhet.* 138213-4) It follows that Fortenbaugh is certainly right to suppose that hatred, rather than anger, is the attitude of a juror voting to condemn an offender (105), though this must not lead us to discount the fact that for Aristotle, such hatred is closely akin to the interpersonal attitude of anger.

(1379a32) Because justified anger at real injustice can motivate actions that would otherwise be wrong, it is crucial that an Aristotelian agent, who is appropriately disposed to become angry in response to wrongdoing, be able to tell exactly when another person is responsible for his or her offending action, in the sense of being justly liable to an angry response.

The importance of this link between responsibility and response has been adumbrated in a recent treatment by David Konstan, who has established a vital connection between Aristotle's treatment of anger and his account of voluntary and involuntary action. He describes the plea that one's action was involuntary as a strategy for the appeasement of anger, and so sets both anger and voluntariness in an explicitly interpersonal light.¹⁵ As in Konstan's discussion of anger, the focus here is on slights, and his argument relies mainly on the *Rhetoric's* discussion of πρᾶνσις, or calming down. (1380a5-b2) If, in light of what was argued above, we once again expand the *Rhetoric's* narrow focus on slights in light of the *Ethics'* interest in anger as a response to wrongdoing generally, we can come to realize the far-reaching importance of anger as an interpersonal emotional reaction. It is not only that Aristotle consistently introduces his accounts of voluntariness in terms of interpersonal reactions to both virtue and vice, but also that, in a scheme of rectificatory justice which is based on the reactive sentiment of anger, the conditions required to justify anger take on a particularly central role.¹⁶

In a passage that is quoted above, we have seen that Aristotle describes anger as a response to apparent injustice: ἐπὶ φαινομένη γὰρ ἀδικία ἡ ὀργή ἐστίν. (1135b28-29) This claim occurs in a passage in which Aristotle is concerned with showing how voluntariness relates to

¹⁵ Konstan, *Before Forgiveness*, 23-26.

¹⁶ In both the Eudemian and the Nicomachean versions, Aristotle introduces the topic of voluntariness with the claim that only what is voluntary incurs either praise or blame. (EE 1223a9-15; EN 1109b30-35) On praise and blame, see especially Susan Sauvé Meyer, *Aristotle on Moral Responsibility: Aristotle on Moral Responsibility: Character and Cause* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, new ed.), ch. 2.

justice. He refers to his account of voluntary action and asserts that some actions, though wrong, are not instances of injustice if they are done involuntarily, but merely unjust acts. The qualification that anger responds to *apparent* injustice must therefore make room for the responder to ascertain that what strikes him as an offence has in fact been done involuntarily. Anger, then, is like blame in being tied to voluntariness. As reactive emotions, both work to motivate the account of voluntariness by making it a necessary matter of practical ethics to ascertain whether an act is voluntary before it is possible to determine what ought to be one's own response. Because voluntary wrongdoing licenses reactions like anger and blame, and because these not only carry social sanctions but also entail the desire for revenge, Aristotle needs to offer a way of determining whether, in a given situation, anger is justified in response to the wrongdoing at hand.

This, in its turn, is directly connected with Aristotle's account of ἐπιείκεια, or fairness in the application of the law. Someone who has this virtue will recognize that a lawgiver cannot legislate for every particular situation, and will accordingly exercise a certain flexibility in responding to the wrongdoing of others. Prominent in this regard is an assessment of the degree to which the offender has acted voluntarily. In cases where the law, owing to its broad generality, makes someone seem to be an offender, the equitable person is prepared to countenance unforeseen considerations that exculpate the offender or mitigate his guilt. But even while ἐπιείκεια provides a way in which the good man can modulate his response to another's wrongdoing according to a fair assessment of that person's responsibility, this response still remains tied to the offender's guilt or innocence, and depends on this for its justification. There is certainly no indication in Aristotle that the equitable person will refrain from anger as a matter of policy: we must rather assume that to the extent that the equitable

person is virtuous, he will strike the mean that is mildness and tend to be forgiving rather than to go to the other extreme—but when an especially wicked act calls for a proportionately angry response, even the ἐπιεικής will not be wanting in the desire for vengeance.¹⁷ And crucially for our discussion in the next chapter, Aristotle clearly assumes that the equitable person will have a more thorough acquaintance with the facts of a case than what was available to the lawgiver, and while this is reasonable enough, what Aristotle does not consider is how this person will respond when his own knowledge of the case, though better than the lawgiver's, still is not enough to determine whether he should react with anger or blame on the one hand, or forgiveness or pity on the other.

So far I have been arguing that Aristotle understands anger as an interpersonal response to wrongdoing, and that his belief in justified anger informs his discussion of rectificatory justice and motivates his treatment of voluntary action. I turn now to the evidence that Peripatetic philosophers after Aristotle shared his understanding of anger. There is, first of all, the fact that Stoics clearly came to understand anger as an emotional reaction to one person's injustice to another, and in their debate with the Peripatetics on the topic they certainly thought they were discussing the same thing as their opponents. Even in the Chrysippean definition of anger preserved by Stobaeus and Diogenes Laertius, there is some evidence of engagement with Aristotle's definition:

ὀργή μὲν οὖν ἐστὶν ἐπιθυμία <τοῦ> τιμωρῆσθαι τὸν δοκοῦντα ἡδίκηκεναι παρὰ τὸ προσήκον. (Stobaeus 2.91,10 = SVF 395)

Anger is a desire to take vengeance against someone who seems to have done wrong contrary to what is fitting.

¹⁷ Nussbaum, 'Equity and Mercy', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Spring 1993, 22:2, 83-125, 97

ὀργή δὲ ἐπιθυμία τις τιμωρίας τοῦ δοκοῦντος ἡδικηκέναι οὐ προσηκόντως. (DL 7.113 = SVF 396)

Anger is a desire for vengeance against someone who seems to have done wrong in a way that is not fitting.

Like Aristotle's, Chrysippus' definition describes anger as a desire (ὄρεξις in Aristotle, ἐπιθυμία in the Stoic definition) for vengeance (τιμωρία in both), and repeats Aristotle's qualification that anger is in response to an *apparent* offense. It also includes the word προσηκόν (or its cognate adverb) as its final word: in the Stoic definition, the qualification that the apparent injustice must have been committed contrary to what is fitting would be otiose—since any injustice is contrary to what is fitting—unless it is meant to recall Aristotle's definition (which makes room for the possibility that slights might sometimes be called for). It is also clear that in objecting to the Peripatetic defense of anger, Seneca took for granted that his opponents understood anger as a response to injustice: indeed, as we shall see in the following chapter, it appears that the strongest arguments Peripatetics brought against the Stoic rejection of the passions is that without anger, a good person cannot respond adequately to injustice.

Within the Lyceum itself, there is also evidence that Theophrastus took anger to be a response to wrongdoing. He seems to have held that anger is a natural response to injustice, though even in the pursuit of vengeance it may not be a suitable basis for action. Some of his advice regarding anger is preserved by Stobaeus:

Θεοφράστου· οὐ μὴν οὐδὲ μετ' ὀργῆς πρακτέον τοῖς φρονίμοις οὐδέν. ἀλόγιστον γὰρ θυμός, καὶ μετὰ προνοίας οὐδὲν ἂν ποτε ποιήσειεν, ἀλλὰ μεθύων ταῖς φιλονεικίαις, ὥς ἔτυχε, χρήται ταῖς ὀρμαῖς. ὥστε δεῖ μὴ ἐξ ὑπογούου τῶν ἀμαρτημάτων τὰς τιμωρίας μῆτε παρὰ τῶν οἰκετῶν μῆτε παρὰ τῶν ἄλλων λαμβάνειν, ἵνα τὸ τῷ λογισμῷ κράτιστον, μὴ τὸ θυμῷ φίλον ἀεὶ πράττης καὶ δίκην παρὰ τῶν ἐχθρῶν λαμβάνης, ἐξ ἧς μέλλεις σαυτὸν μὴ λυπῶν ἐκείνους βλάπτειν. τὸ γὰρ τιμωρεῖσθαι τινα κακῶς ἑαυτὸν ποιοῦντα δίκην δίδοναι οὐχ ἥττον ἢ λαμβάνειν ἐστίν. ὥστε δεῖ σχολῇ μᾶλλον ἀμύνεσθαι ζητεῖν ἢ ταχέως ἀλυσιτελῶς ἑαυτῷ κολάσαι τὸν ἐχθρόν. (Stobaeus 3.19.12=526 FHSG)

Theophrastus: Nor indeed should men of practical wisdom do anything at all in anger. For rage is most unreasonable and will never do anything with forethought, but, being

drunk with contentiousness, it acts impulsively and at random. Consequently you ought not to take immediate revenge for wrongs done, either from slaves or from anyone else, in order that you may always do what reason deems best, not what is dear to rage, and in order that you may exact a penalty from your enemies, as a result of which you are going to harm them without causing yourself pain. For taking revenge on someone while injuring oneself is no less to pay a penalty than to exact one. Consequently one ought to seek to retaliate over a period of time rather than quickly to chasten the enemy in a way not beneficial to oneself. (Tr. FHSg, with modifications)

Theophrastus clearly understands anger in connection with vengeance *for wrongs done*: that ἁμαρτημάτων must have his strong sense is clear from the fact that Theophrastus thinks it is fitting for the offending party to pay a penalty for these misdeeds, and for the injured party to exact it. He cautions against acting impulsively in anger on the grounds that it prevents agents from choosing rationally, particularly when it comes to selecting the best way of harming an enemy.¹⁸ Thus, even while he commends the pursuit of vengeance, he offers a prudential reason for waiting for anger to subside before taking revenge.¹⁹ The claim that anger renders agents incapable of correct reasoning is also preserved in a passage of Marcus Aurelius which approvingly discusses Theophrastus' argument that wrongs done in anger are less serious than those done from appetite. (Marcus Aurelius 2.10 = 441 FHSg) This is because the angry man is forced by pain to become enraged, and acts irrationally without enjoying it, whereas the other man acts on his appetite and takes pleasure in fulfilling it. This suggests that Theophrastus may have accepted and built on Aristotle's claim that anger is both a natural and a necessary passion (NE1135b22), while contributing the advice that it should be limited without being removed

¹⁸ By contrast, at *Politics* 1312b25-34 Aristotle argues that the painfulness of anger and the fact that it causes people not to use their reason can make it more, rather than less, effective.

¹⁹ Fortenbaugh comments: 'It is the desire for revenge that makes a man "drunken with contentiousness" and "subject to impulses," and it is the belief that wrong has been done that causes a man to want "revenge for misdeeds." This belief can be erroneous, but it can also be quite correct and justify anger. The man of practical wisdom avoids uncontrolled, impetuous action, but he does on occasion become angry.' (William W. 'Theophrastus on Emotion', in William Fortenbaugh, Pamela Huby, and A. A. Long, eds. *Theophrastus of Eresus: On his Life and Work*, 209-29 [New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1985] 210-211)

entirely.²⁰ This view may even lie behind the two neighbouring mentions of Theophrastus in Seneca's *De Ira*:

‘irascuntur boni uiri pro suorum iniuriis.’ cum hoc dicis, Theophraste, quaeris inuidiam praeceptis fortioribus et relicto iudice ad coronam uenis. quia unusquisque in eiusmodi suorum casu irascitur, putas iudicatuos homines id fieri debere quod faciunt; fere enim iustum quisque affectum iudicat quem adgnoscat. ...

‘Good men get angry at wrongs done to those close to them.’ When you say this, Theophrastus, you call your stronger teachings into disrepute, and ignore the judge to face the gallery. Since everyone gets angry when something like that happens to those close to them, you think people will judge that what they do is what ought to be done; each person generally thinks any passion just if he recognizes that he has felt it.²¹

‘non potest,’ inquit, ‘fieri,’ Theophrastus, ‘ut non uir bonus irascatur malis.’ isto modo quo melior quisque, hoc iracundior erit. uide ne contra placidior solutusque affectibus et cui nemo odio sit. (1.12.3 and 12.1 = 446 FHSG)

‘It is impossible,’ says Theophrastus, ‘that a good man should not become angry with the wicked.’ On that view, the better a person is, the angrier he will be. Consider whether, on the contrary, he is not more peaceable, and free from passions, and the sort who holds no one in hatred.

Notwithstanding Seneca's polemical purpose and his fondness for prosopopoeia, his two Theophrastean interjections are consistent with the view of the Stobaeus and Marcus passages in presenting anger as an unavoidable response to wrongdoing, and Seneca's objections seem to charge him with just this. Seneca seems to be exaggerating Theophrastus' commitment to a defence of the positive value of anger (since, as the Stobaeus passage shows, Theophrastus may have been even more reticent than Aristotle in this vein), but he may be accurately reporting Theophrastus' insistence that *even* good men cannot help becoming angry in response to

²⁰ There is also a striking similarity between what Marcus attributes to Theophrastus and Aristotle's view that *akrasia* is less shameful when it is due to *thumos* than when it is due to appetite (*NE* 1149a24-b3). However, if the argument of the Marcus passage can be attributed to Theophrastus, it is appreciably different from the reasoning we find in *Nicomachean Ethics* 7. Whereas for Aristotle the angry action is less bad in that it is like a command of reason, though hastily and imperfectly understood, for Theophrastus (or Marcus) it is more like something one does against one's will, since one takes no pleasure in the action. For Aristotle the angry action has something good in it, but for Theophrastus anger is just a mitigating factor in the assessment of a wrong. Something closer to this thought appears at the end of Aristotle's discussion, where he claims that angry actions are more likely to receive *suggnome* because they are 'more natural' (1149b4-11).

²¹ Cf. the very similar charge levelled by Epictetus at the Roman magistrate who deserted his sick daughter because he was overwhelmed by feeling (1.11.6).

injustice. Whereas Aristotle described complete freedom from anger as undesirable, Theophrastus appears to have described it as impossible. That these two views are elided to some extent in Seneca's Stoic polemic reflects the fact that both Peripatetic positions must be undermined in order to establish a Stoic account.

However, the most interesting aspect of Theophrastus' contribution to the Peripatetic philosophy of anger is to have made explicit a connection between anger and blame. The relevant evidence comes from Simplicius' commentary on Aristotle's *Categories*:

Εἰ δέ τινες ἐπιλαμβάνονται τῆς διαιρέσεως μὴ τὸ ἐν πολλὰ ποιούσης, ὅπερ ἔδει, ἀλλὰ πολλὰ συμφορούσης εἰς ἓν καὶ ἓν εἶδος τιθεμένης τῆς ἕξεως καὶ διαθέσεως, διότι τὸ μὲν ἐπιτείνεται, τὸ δὲ ἀνίεται μένον ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ ιδιότητι, καὶ λέγοιεν δυνατόν εἶναι καὶ κατ' εἶδος διαφέροντά τινα μηδὲν κωλύειν ἔχειν τὴν κατὰ τὸ μᾶλλον καὶ ἥττον διαφορὰν καὶ παραδείγματα ἐπάγοιεν τὴν μέμψιν καὶ τὴν ὀργὴν καὶ τὸν θυμόν, ἅπερ φησὶν ὁ Θεόφραστος ἐν τῷ Περὶ παθῶν κατὰ τὸ μᾶλλον καὶ ἥττον ἔχειν τὴν διαφορὰν καὶ μὴ εἶναι ὁμοειδῆ· ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ φιλία καὶ εὖνοια ἐπιτείνεται καὶ ἀνίεται καὶ ἄλλο εἶδος ἑκάτερα ἐστίν, ὡμότης τε καὶ θηριότης πρὸς ὀργὴν ἐπιθυμία τε καὶ ἔρως ὡσαύτως διέστηκεν, καὶ καθόλου τὰ δυσφημότερα τῶν παθῶν ἐπιτεινόμενα εἰς ἄλλο μεταβάλλει εἶδος. (Simplicius, *On Aristotle's Categories* 8 8b26-7 = FHSG 438)

Suppose some people object to the classification which does not make the one many, as (they say) is necessary, but brings together many into one and makes one class of habit and disposition on the grounds that the former is intensified and the latter slackened, while maintaining the same specific character. And suppose they say that it is possible that nothing prevents even some things which differ in kind from differing in respect of the more and less. And suppose they should adduce as examples *blame* and *anger* and *animosity*, which Theophrastus in his work *On Emotions* says differ in respect of the more and less and are not identical in kind. Similarly, too, friendship and goodwill are intensified and relaxed and each is different in kind; savagery and bestiality in relation to anger, and appetite and lust are distinguished in the same way, and in general the more shameful of the emotions, when intensified, change into another kind. [Tr. FHSG, with slight modifications]

In Simplicius' report, Theophrastus is said to have situated anger on a kind of continuum with μέμψις, that is blaming or fault-finding, as well as θυμός, animosity, which he seems to treat as particularly intense or violent anger. In understanding anger as an intensification of blame, Theophrastus makes a direct connection between the emotional reaction to the wrongdoing of

another person and the attitude that holds another person accountable or responsible for wrongdoing.²²

The fragments of Theophrastus are particularly valuable in view of the scantness of direct evidence for later Peripatetic treatments of the ethics of anger. In the *Magna Moralia*, anger fits neatly into the author's account of virtue as mean states of the passions.²³ Cicero reports, with a focus on anger, a Peripatetic defence of the usefulness of the passions, but grief receives a substantially greater share of the debate in his *Tusculans*.²⁴ Alexander, though he seems to have held to Aristotle's doctrines that mildness moderates the passion of anger (*Ethical Problem* 24.146,23) and that it is rational to be angry in some cases (*Ethical Problem* 29.159,32-34), does not foreground ethical discussion about the emotions. Large as the Lyceum looms in Seneca's treatment of anger, his opponents in the *De Ira* are most amply represented by his response to their view, to which we will turn in our next chapter. Whatever may have been lost of the later Aristotelian moral philosophy of emotion, there is no doubt that its

²² Fortenbaugh's attempt to use *Characters* 17 (on the μεμψίμοιρος) to establish Theophrastus' understanding of μέμψις is unpromising for the simple fact that blaming one's lot and blaming other people are hardly the same thing. In his edition and commentary of the *Characters*, Diggle, who aptly renders the μεμψίμοιρος as 'the ungrateful grumbler', rightly observes, 'To translate μεμψίμοιρος as 'faultfinding, criticizing, querulous' (LSJ) is to overlook the second half of the compounds' (376). In treating μεμψιμοιρία as a synonym of μέμψις, Fortenbaugh makes exactly this mistake. Better parallels for Theophrastus' use of μέμψις, which connect it directly with one person's holding another accountable for wrongdoing and justify the translation 'blame', are as follows: It is paired with anger at *Philoctetes* 1309, where Neoptolemus, after giving Philoctetes back his bow, protests that Philoctetes no longer has any reason to be angry with or to blame him: εἶέν. τὰ μὲν δὴ τόξ' ἔχεις, κοῦκ ἔσθ' ὅτου | ὀργὴν ἔχοις ἄν οὐδὲ μέμψιν εἰς ἐμέ. (1308-1309) Demosthenes associates blame with vengeful punishment at *De Corona* 85, where the speaker disavows wrongdoing by arguing that his actions did not incur blame or punishment: καὶ μὴν ὅταν ἡ νέα καὶ γνώριμα πᾶσι τὰ πράγματα, ἐάν τε καλῶς ἔχη, χάριτος τυγχάνει, ἐάν θ' ὡς ἐτέρως, τιμωρίας. φαίνομαι τοίνυν ἐγὼ χάριτος τετυχηκῶς τότε, καὶ οὐ μέμψεως οὐδὲ τιμωρίας. Blame, along with reproach (κατηγορία) is said to be due to wrongdoing in the *Third Philippic*: καὶ μὴν κάκεϊνό γ' ἴστε, ὅτι ὅσα μὲν ὑπὸ Λακεδαιμονίων ἢ ὑφ' ἡμῶν ἔπασχον οἱ Ἕλληνες, ἀλλ' οὖν ὑπὸ γνησίων γ' ὄντων τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἡδικοῦντο, καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον ἂν τις ὑπέλαβεν τοῦτο, ὥσπερ ἂν εἰ υἱὸς ἐν οὐσίᾳ πολλῇ γεγονὼς γνήσιος διάκειται μὴ καλῶς μηδ' ὀρθῶς, κατ' αὐτὸ μὲν τοῦτ' ἄξιον μέμψεως εἶναι καὶ κατηγορίας, ὥς δ' οὐ προσήκων ἢ ὥς οὐ κληρονόμος τούτων ὢν ταῦτ' ἐποίει, οὐκ ἐνεῖναι λέγειν. (*Philippic III* 30). See also Xenophon *Cyr.* 4.5.21.1; 5.5.15.1

²³ On 'Magnus', see Inwood, *Ethics After Aristotle* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2014), 26-36

²⁴ On Cicero's account of the Peripatetic position, see Margaret Graver, *Cicero on the Emotions: Tusculan Disputations 3 and 4*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 163-167.

proponents reflected the opinions of their school's founders when they maintained that the elimination of anger is neither feasible or desirable.

We therefore have clear evidence that the views of Aristotle and the earliest members of the Peripatos are incompatible with the Stoic rejection of anger, and this gives us some access to the Aristotelian opposition that proved fruitful to the Stoic philosophy of moral response. We have seen that anger, as an other-directed, reactive emotion, is not only concerned with social standing, but with the justice of interpersonal action. For Aristotle, anger is fundamentally linked to blame in that it attaches only to voluntary actions; this connection, which is also articulated by Theophrastus, furnishes a link between the philosophy of moral responsibility and the philosophy of moral response. As shall see in the next chapter, however, Seneca would show that the connection between the wrongdoing of one person and the anger of another is not an unbreakable one, since nothing makes it necessary, either as a matter of fact or of morals, that anger should follow directly on the negative assessment of another person.

Seneca: Doing Justice to Injustice

We have just considered the view, shared by Aristotle and his Peripatetic followers, that the interpersonal emotional attitude of anger is necessary as part of a morally adequate response to injustice. In Seneca, we find sustained criticism of this view, and the purpose of the present chapter will be to show how Seneca defends the Stoic rejection of anger against the Peripatetic claim that without anger, we cannot address injustice as we must. Of the many reasons Seneca offers for eliminating anger, some stress the benefits of non-anger for the tranquillity of one's own soul, but our focus here will be on Seneca's treatment of non-anger as the correct attitude to the offender.¹ This chapter will argue that, by treating one person's response to another's wrongdoing as needing its own justification above and beyond the offender's moral responsibility, Seneca challenges the idea that injustice justifies resentment, and with it the notion that a response to wrongdoing which lacks anger will for that reason lack moral vigour. For Seneca, the recognition of others' wrongdoing gives rise to its own inquiry in practical ethics, which takes the offender's responsibility for granted and focusses instead on the question of how another moral agent should respond to the offence.

Seneca wrote two treatises on the response to wrongdoing, *De Ira* and *De Clementia*.²

The two works differ importantly in their mode of address, their public purpose, and the

¹ Martha Nussbaum, to whose sensitive account of the *De Ira* in her book *The Therapy of Desire* this study as a whole is deeply indebted, points toward this approach: 'Is mercy merely a strategy to keep the self pure from rage? Or is it also supposed to be the correct attitude to the offender? Seneca's argument begins by insisting on the former goal; but by the end of the *De Ira*, and in the entirety of the *De Clementia*, he seems to endorse the latter view as well.' (429) Cf. her very similar remarks in the crucial paper *Equity and Mercy*, 102-103, which draws lessons from Seneca for contemporary social and judicial thought.

² Seneca's intense interest in what I am calling 'the philosophy of moral response' extends beyond these works. Most prominently, the late treatise *De Beneficiis* considers how one ought to respond to the *good* actions of others as well as how one should respond to their ingratitude. The latter theme is prominent in the treatise and coheres well with Seneca's general account of how one should respond to the unfairness of others; Seneca's conclusion to the entire work (7.26-32) amounts to a short essay on this topic, which heavily emphasizes its importance, and

transparency with which they display their philosophical engagement, but they are united by their orientation toward the problem of how to respond to acts of injustice. Where a leading rival view holds both that anger is necessary in response to wrongdoing on the personal level, and that on the social level, the administration of justice institutionalizes the desire for revenge, the arguments for non-anger and for clemency are crucially and inextricably intertwined. In its strictest sense, the virtue of clemency can operate only in judicial or political contexts, but the judicial and the personal run together for Seneca, and in what follows I will treat them with the same fluidity—on the understanding that, just as Seneca consistently assumes, many of the same ideas actually do inform the response to wrongdoing in both kinds of cases.³ Both treatises, after all, are addressed to people with whom Seneca had a close personal relationship—his brother Novatus and his pupil, the emperor Nero—and both are written with a view to helping them perform their function as judges.

In an important passage from the beginning of the *De Clementia* Seneca addresses the view of unnamed opponents who hold that clemency, because it is essentially a response to wrongdoing, works only in the interest of wrongdoers. As this passage falls directly between the opening address to Nero in 1.1 and the prefatory division of the subject in 1.3, it seems to represent a sort of introduction to the problem Seneca will consider:

contains the famous motto, *uincit malos pertinax bonitas* (7.31.1). *De Beneficiis* is alert to differences in personal perspective on wrongdoing, as when Seneca counsels his readers to treat ingratitude as the greatest crime when they face the prospect of committing it, but as the slightest crime when another person commits it against them. (1.10.4) This is very close to Seneca's treatment of ingratitude in *Letter* 81, where Seneca endorses the conduct of the *remissior iudex* who discounts wrongdoing against benefits received from the same person; on this letter in particular, and on judges in Seneca in general, see the crucial discussion by Inwood, 'Moral Judgement in Seneca', in *Reading Seneca: Stoic Philosophy at Rome*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005) 201-223 (215-216 for *Letter* 81).

³ Cf. Nussbaum: 'Seneca understands mercy as a broad notion, applicable in both public and private dealings—although he is concerned with the assignment of punishments rather than the determination of guilt. Although mercy does have a special prominence in the legal realm, it requires only the possibility of punishing.' (*Therapy* 428n38)

Esse autem aliquos scio qui clementia pessimum quemque putent sustineri, quoniam nisi post crimen superuacua est et sola haec uirtus inter innocentes cessat. sed primum omnium, sicut medicinae apud aegros usus, etiam apud sanos honor est, ita clementiam, quamuis poena digni inuocent, etiam innocentes colunt. deinde habet haec in persona quoque innocentium locum, quia interim fortuna pro culpa est; nec innocentiae tantum clementia succurrit, sed saepe uirtuti, quoniam quidem condicione temporum incidunt quaedam quae possint laudata puniri. adice quod magna pars hominum est quae reuerti ad innocentiam possit, si <clementia spem restituerit (*suppl.* Ball)>.

Non tamen uolgo ignoscere decet; nam ubi discrimen inter malos bonosque sublatum est, confusio sequitur et uitiorum eruptio; itaque adhibenda moderatio est, quae sanabilia ingenia distinguere a deploratis sciat. nec promiscuam habere ac uolgarem clementiam oportet nec abscisam; nam tam omnibus ignoscere crudelitas quam nulli. modum tenere debemus; sed quia difficile est temperamentum, quidquid aequo plus futurum est, in partem humaniorem praeponderet. (*De Clem.* 1.2.1-2)

Now, I know there are some people who think that all the worst people are supported by clemency, arguing that the need for it exists only after a crime has been committed, and that it alone has no application among innocent people. But, to begin with, just as medicine has its use among the sick, but is also honoured by those in good health, so too clemency, though invoked by the guilty, is cultivated by the innocent as well. Moreover, it also affects the standing of innocent people, since sometimes fortune takes the place of guilt; nor does clemency come to the aid of innocence alone, but often to the aid of virtue, since it does in fact happen that, owing to the state of the times, what normally meets with praise meets with punishment instead. Add to this that the majority of people can be turned back to innocence, if <clemency restores hope.>

It is not, however, appropriate to grant pardon to one and all; for where the distinction between the bad and the good has been effaced, the result is confusion and an explosion of vices; it is therefore necessary to exercise moderation of the kind that can distinguish minds that can be cured from those beyond all hope. Clemency must not be held out indiscriminately to one and all, nor should it be cut short. We must keep some measure; but since moderation is difficult, and there will be something more than would let the scale hang level, may the heavier side be the more humane.

According to these opponents, responding with clemency to wrongdoing gives licence to

wrongdoers by creating for them a *species impunitatis*, as Calvin calls it in his commentary.⁴

⁴ Both Malaspina and Braund *ad loc.* cite Ammendola (1928) for the view that the unnamed opponents in this passage are hard-line Stoic philosophers (apparently relying on Cicero, *Pro Murena* 61-63); both appear to favour a connection with Cato's speech in Sallust, *Bellum Catalinum* 52. Braund's citation from Syme's *Sallust* is apt, however: 'the Cato of the oration discards theory, neglects precedent and overrides legality.' (115, cited at Braund 183) Neither passage supports the notion that Seneca's unnamed opponents are stricter or more orthodox Stoics: at most, Cato's speech represents high-minded aristocratic prejudice, and there is no need to take him as a spokesman for Stoic doctrine. Cicero's mocking remarks at *Pro Mur.* 61-3, where Cicero mentions Zeno's rejection of pity and pardon alongside a predictable set of Stoic paradoxes, should clearly be treated with caution, given Cicero's obvious goal of making Cato's prosecution appear based on rigid, paradoxical convictions. In any case, Cicero

This view may be a popular one, of the kind that is still common today; thus it need not have its source in any philosophical school, and it may not always have a precise formulation.⁵

However, to the extent that this popular view involves a defence of punishment based on the retributive sentiments, it is allied with the Aristotelian views that Seneca targets in the *De Ira*, and this is natural enough, considering the role of widespread beliefs in Aristotelian thought.⁶

That Seneca so clearly understands *clementia* as involving freedom from anger is a further indication that his treatise takes issue with Peripatetic views.⁷ Just as in the *De Ira*, Peripatetic objections put pressure on Seneca to show that non-anger does not fail in its adequacy to confront wrongdoing, so too Seneca must defend clemency against the view that, by treating offenders leniently, it simply tolerates criminality. In reply to the detractors of clemency, Seneca exploits a thematic analogy between medicine and philosophical correction to show that what responds to imperfection need not be imperfection's ally: like medicine, clemency works to set right what has gone wrong, and even those with no present need of healing or of correction can

makes no mention of an argument resembling the one Seneca attributes to his opponents. Thus, whatever connection the passage from the *Pro Murena* has to Stoic doctrine, it bears no resemblance to the view Seneca is criticizing; on the other hand, while Cato's speech from the *Bellum Catilinum* does bear such a resemblance, it has no meaningful connection to Stoic doctrine. For my own discussion of Seneca's relationship to the views of the early Stoa on this topic, see below, pp. 57-60.

⁵ Plutarch attributes a favourable view of the angry man to οἱ πολλοί at *De Cohibenda Ira* 456f3. Such a view is the principal target of Nussbaum's *Equity and Mercy*; she considers the contemporary implications of her argument from p. 109ff. For a discussion that is (wrongly, I believe) quite sympathetic to the retributive approach, see Murphy, *Forgiveness and Resentment*, ch. 1 of Murphy and Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

⁶ That Seneca's principal opponents in the *De Ira* are Peripatetics is a matter of general agreement. Even if, as Fillion-Lahille contends, Seneca directs his criticism in Book 2 of the *De Ira* toward the Epicureans, they are, as she herself puts it, unexpected allies of the Peripatetics. (Janine Fillion-Lahille, *Le De Ira de Sénèque et la philosophie stoïcienne des passions* [Paris: Klincksieck, 1984], 10-11)

⁷ This is first in evidence during the speech Seneca gives to Nero ('in hac tanta facultate rerum non ira me ad iniqua supplicia compulit', 1.1.3), but see also 1.5.4. The appeal to moderation near the end of the present passage should not deceive us: Seneca emphatically does not advocate moderate anger or moderate hostility toward the wrongdoer, so that any resemblance to Aristotle's view is merely superficial. With this passage as a whole cf. *De Ira* 2.17.2: "languidus" inquit "animus est qui ira caret." Verum est, si nihil habeat ira valentius. Nec latronem oportet esse nec praedam, nec misericordem nec crudelem: illius nimis mollis animus, huius nimis durus est; temperatus sit sapiens et ad res fortius agendas non iram sed vim adhibeat.'

admire that. Moreover, the regard in which medicine is generally held is due in large part to each person's awareness that he will someday be ill, so that this argument, together with the next, impugns the misguided confidence of those who believe they do not, and never will, have need of mercy.⁸ Another central element of Seneca's thought about the response to wrongdoing is introduced in the argument that closes this paragraph: though commentators follow Gruter in marking a lacuna at the end of the sentence, 'adice quod magna pars hominum est quae reverti ad innocentiam possit, si ...' it is clear that however this lacuna is filled, Seneca is connecting clemency with the reform of the offender.⁹ None of Seneca's arguments deny that clemency is directed toward other people *as wrongdoers*, but as we shall see, his view does not allow the response to be fully determined by their status as such.

The view Seneca opposes bears a strong affinity to the concern regarding 'condonation' expressed in several recent treatments of forgiveness, where it figures as an argument in favour of some degree of resentment.¹⁰ Seneca is apparently well aware of the danger of sliding into condonation: in a striking formulation, 'tam omnibus ignoscere crudelitas quam nulli,' he equates the moral insensibility involved in indiscriminate pardoning with that involved in not pardoning where pardon is due.¹¹ What Seneca calls 'promiscuam ac uolgarem clementiam'

⁸ Commentators (Favez 1950, 40, (cited by Malaspina, 248-249) Braund 180) describe Seneca's second argument in this passage ('deinde habet... laudata puniri.') as a flat denial of the premise that clemency only responds to wrongdoing—an overstatement that obscures the subtlety of Seneca's view. He shows that the innocent call on clemency *when they are taken for guilty*. In these cases, clemency would be directed toward them as apparently guilty parties, so understood from the perspective of person who is responding to their perceived wrongdoing. Thus Seneca does not deny that clemency is inherently a reaction to wrongdoing, allowing for the important qualification that it is the *appearance* of wrongdoing, from the point of view of the responder, to which it really reacts.

⁹ Malaspina argues in favour of supplements, such as A. P. Ball's, which include the word 'clementia'; neither he nor Braund, who prints Basore's 'si poenae remissio fuerit' believes that a definitive supplement is possible.

¹⁰ See especially Aurel Kolnai, 'Forgiveness', 91-106, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series, Vol. 74 (1973-1974), 96-97, Hampton, 'Forgiveness, Resentment and Hatred', ch. 2 of Murphy and Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy* 39-42, Griswold, *Forgiveness*, 46-47

¹¹ Braund usefully comments *ad loc.* that 'crudelis' and 'crudelitas', which together occur twenty times in the *De Clementia*, often occur where the definition of 'clementia' is at issue, and that 'at 2.4.1 Seneca explicitly denotes *crudelitas* as the antithesis of *clementia*.' *Crudelitas* is itself frequently connected with anger, as especially at *De*

cannot really be clemency at all, but rather a specious defect, since real clemency, being a virtue, could never be disparaged in such terms. Recognizing the real difficulty of discovering the right punishment in each particular case, Seneca urges Nero to incline toward clemency; this honest recognition of the difficulty of correctly judging others justifies clemency as the best attitude to take toward them, at least in the absence of a perfect understanding of where to set a penalty. It is vital to Seneca's argument, however, that he prove that clemency does not undermine the *discrimen inter malos bonosque*. To demonstrate that freedom from anger is not tantamount to universal condonation, Seneca must show how the flexibility afforded by clemency, with its suspension of the harshest judgement, does not impair the sanction of wrongdoing by responding mildly to those who act unjustly.

It is therefore a crucial step in Seneca's strategy to distinguish clemency from condonation by showing that the response directed toward a wrong is separable from the recognition of its wrongness. Anger, for Seneca, does not arise automatically from the acknowledgement that another person has done wrong, so that a response to wrongdoing is a matter of further judgement for the responder. Clemency and freedom from anger are perfectly compatible with disapproval and even condemnation:

parcendum est etiam improbandis civibus (*De Clem.* 1.5.1)

Mercy should be shown even to citizens who deserve reproach.

bonus iudex damnat improbanda, non odit. (*De Ira* 1.16.6)

A good judge condemns what warrants reproach—he does not hate it.

Ira 2.12.6: 'Quantum est effugere maximum malum, iram, et cum illa rabiem saevitiam crudelitatem furorem, alios comites eius adfectus!' and 2.13.2: 'Quid est est amimi quiete otiosius, quid ira laboriosius? Quid clementia remissius, quid crudelitate negotiosius?' The use of *crudelitas* in this passage is still somewhat puzzling, however: just how is *cruel* to pardon indiscriminately? Insofar as *crudelitas* is the opposite of *clementia*, Seneca could just be using it to mean 'not-clemency', but interpreting the term as 'moral insensibility' preserves a more robust comparison between the unforgiving and the indiscriminate; Seneca would thus be exploiting the term's etymological connection to roughness and lack of cultivation.

Though a sound judge will recognize the badness of another's action or character, she will also recognize the occasion to formulate her own response, which need not be an angry or hateful one. Because the response is a new action (the responder's rather than the wrongdoer's), it can be done wrongly or rightly, and indeed an angry response may be just as deserving of correction as the fault to which it responds.

Nec umquam committet uirtus ut uitia dum compescit imitetur; iram ipsam castigandam habet, quae nihilo melior, saepe peior iis delictis quibus irascitur. (*De Ira* 2.6.2)¹²

Nor will virtue ever go so wrong as to imitate vices at the very time when it seeks to restrain them; it takes anger itself to warrant rebuke, as it is no better—and is often worse—than the offences at which it is directed.

Naturally, Seneca can only treat anger as worthy of reproach if such a passionate reaction is voluntary in its own right. This, in fact, is what Seneca has just established a little earlier in Book 2 of the *De Ira*, where a substantial preface argues for the Chrysippean view that anger depends on an act of assent. Not only does this allow Seneca to urge its elimination (which, as he acknowledges at 2.2.1, he could not do if anger were a purely automatic reaction), but it also allows him to divide the assessment of another's action and the reaction to it into separate acts of the rational faculty. He distinguishes three movements of the soul that may take place in reaction to another's wrongdoing, of which two are non-passionate and one is passionate:

Et ut scias quemadmodum incipiant adfectus aut crescant aut efferantur, est primus motus non uoluntarius, quasi praeparatio adfectus et quaedam comminatio; alter cum uoluntate non contumaci, tamquam oporteat me uindicari cum laesus sim, aut oporteat hunc poenas dare cum scelus fecerit; tertius motus est iam inpotens, qui non si oportet ulcisci uult sed utique, qui rationem euicit. (2.4.1)

And so that you may know how passions begin or grow or become carried away: there is an initial, non-voluntary motion, a readying of the passion, as it were, or a

¹² Cf. also 3.25.2. 'denique debeat poenas: non est quod cum illo paria faciamus.' The pithy fragment, *culpa est totam persequi culpam*, cited by Nussbaum as II.7.fr., which might otherwise support this point, is probably not genuine; see Braund 423. Depending on the precise meaning of *persequi* in this sentence, it may or may not come close to reflecting Seneca's view; cf. his use of a cognate expression in 1.12.2.: 'Pater caedetur: defendam; caesus est: *exequar*, quia oportet, non quia dolet.'

kind of threat; then another involving volition, but not stubborn volition, such as the thought that it would be right for me to take vengeance because I have been harmed, or that it would be right for this person to suffer punishment because he has done a wicked deed; the third motion is without control, and wants to take revenge not if it is proper, but in any case, and it has overpowered reason.

Inwood (61-62), who is followed in this by Vogt (71), has shown that only the third movement of the soul is really anger.¹³ It follows that the judgement that another person has done wrong, belonging as it does to the second movement, can be reached without its leading directly to a passionate impulse toward revenge. If some other consideration moves an agent to respond differently (*putavit se aliquis laesum, uoluit ulcisci, dissuadente aliqua causa statim resedit: hanc iram non uoco, motum animi rationi parentem. (2.3.4)*), the responder acts not angrily but rationally, but evidently his action is still a response to the harm he takes himself to have suffered.

In directing both Nero and Novatus, the addressees of *De Clementia* and *De Ira*, to consider their own responses more closely than the wrongdoing of others, Seneca draws attention to a more immediate, practically oriented problem than that of moral responsibility. Rather than attending only to the sometimes inscrutable question of the causes behind another's wrongdoing, a follower of Seneca's prescriptions will concentrate on the question of how he should respond to it—a question that circumstances require him to answer to the best of his ability. By eliminating the reactive attitude of anger, this person becomes free to respond in a genuinely active way, as the circumstances demand. That Seneca anticipates resistance to his approach is signalled by the many objections he considers in the course of these two

¹³ Vogt, 'Anger, present injustice and future revenge in Seneca's *De Ira*' in Gareth Williams and Katharina Volk, eds., 57-74, *New Developments in Seneca Studies. Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition*. Leiden: Brill, 2006, 71, helpfully distinguishes the agent's impressions at the two stages as follows: 'In stage 2, the agent thinks things like "it is *right* for me to take revenge because I have been offended." In stage 3 she does not think in terms of *what is right*: she will assent to something like "I have to take revenge because I have been offended.'

conversational treatises. Prominent among these is an objection related to the one just considered, but with a different emphasis: whereas in the beginning of the *De Clementia*, as we saw above, Seneca addresses the concern that clemency offers a kind of impunity to wrongdoers, in an early passage from the *De Ira* he considers the implications of non-anger for the action of the person who responds to wrongdoing, answering the charge of the proponents of moderate anger that the elimination of anger makes action grow languid and lose its vigour:

Optimum itaque quidam putant temperare iram, non tollere, eoque detracto quod exundat ad salutarem modum cogere, id uero retinere sine quo languebit actio et uis ac uigor animi resoluatur. (1.71)

And so certain people think that it is best to moderate anger instead of removing it, and by stemming its overabundance, to force it to a wholesome mean, while still retaining that without which action will grow languid, and the strength and vigour of the mind will be undone.

Earlier, we have seen Aristotle express the concern that someone who does not become angry is not merely foolish, but also insensible to the moral demands of self-respect and care for those close to him. Insofar as ‘languebit actio et uis ac uigor animi resoluatur’ plausibly represents the thought behind Aristotle’s claim that the angerless man ‘δοκεῖ γὰρ οὐκ αἰσθάνεσθαι οὐδὲ λυπεῖσθαι’, it seems possible that, when he counters this objection, Seneca is responding to a genuinely Aristotelian view taken up by his own Peripatetic opponents. To meet this challenge, Seneca must substantiate the non-angry response to wrongdoing as well as discrediting the angry response. Seneca’s critique of anger depends not only on separating the response of a second or third party from the offender’s responsibility, but establishing what a rational, non-angry response will be. In this Seneca’s thought on the response to wrongdoing moves beyond the mere elimination of anger to consider both the structure and the content of a non-angry response. Seneca makes it clear that the range of responses available to the non-angry man is broader than might be assumed, since many conventionally accepted responses that are often

taken to require anger do not require it at all; moreover, Seneca allows that without anger and in the right circumstances, they are perfectly appropriate—though when driven by higher motives than anger, these responses take on an entirely different character.

In the *De Ira*, this emerges when an imagined interlocutor objects to Seneca's rejection of anger by putting to him an extreme case in which, on conventional assumptions, it would simply be impossible, and perhaps even reprehensible, not to become angry:

'Quid ergo?' inquit 'uir bonus non irascitur, si caedi patrem suum uiderit, si rapi matrem?' Non irascetur sed uindicabit, sed tuebitur. Quid autem times ne parum magnus illi stimulus etiam sine ira pietas sit? Aut dic eodem modo: 'quid ergo? cum uideat secari patrem suum, uir bonus non flebit nec linquetur animo?' Quae accidere feminis uidemus, quotiens illas leuis periculi suspicio perculit. Officia sua uir bonus exequetur inconfusus, intrepidus; et sic bono uiro digna faciet ut nihil faciat uiro indignum. Pater caedetur: defendam; caesus est: exequar, quia oportet, non quia dolet. (*De Ira* 1.12.1-2)

'What?' says someone, 'Does a good man not become angry if he sees his father being killed or his mother being raped?' He will not be angry, he will avenge and protect. Why are you afraid that without anger, respect for his obligations will be too little to get him going? Or try saying, 'What? When he sees his father being wounded, won't a good man weep and lose spirit?' That's what we see happening to women, whenever they are struck by the smallest hint of danger. A good man will carry out his duty without confusion or trepidation; in doing what is worthy of good man he will do nothing that is unworthy of a man. Is my father being murdered? I'll defend him. Has he been murdered? I'll avenge him, because it befits me, not because it pains me.

This challenge invokes the limit case in which manifest injustice is done in proximity to a good man, where the victim is a beloved member of his family. In this case, not only does it seem nearly impossible to avoid becoming angry, but a conventional assessment of the morally appropriate reaction would seem to require an angry response. How, then, if he does not become angry, can a man who loves his family as he should do justice to the injustice of extreme physical violence inflicted on those who have the greatest claim on his care? It is no exaggeration to say that the viability of Seneca's argument against anger turns on his ability to answer this challenge, since if he is forced to countenance even a limit case in which anger is

appropriate, he has given away the game to the Peripatetics.¹⁴ Seneca's reply depends on showing that an agent who has not assented to becoming angry nevertheless has a broad range of responses available to him, so that whatever reaction reason requires is possible without any need for a passionate emotional response. Virtue itself, as he says here and elsewhere, provides on its own sufficient motivation. (1.12.2, cf. e.g. 2.17.2) This argument must succeed in order to disable the Peripatetics' leading argument in defence of anger, which is that, in certain situations, a person of appropriate moral sensibility simply cannot avoid it and should not.

What is surprising about Seneca's reply is that, in the limit case put to him in the objection, the response he recommends is the pursuit of revenge. Since revenge is the very thing that the angry person desires, Seneca has been thought to concede, however tacitly, that he cannot quite meet the objection. Writing about this passage in an extremely valuable chapter on the *De Ira* in *The Therapy of Desire*, Martha Nussbaum identifies what she considers a tension in Seneca's account, and asks how the good person's justified pursuit of revenge does not collapse into anger:

What are the judgements of the good person in this example? It would appear that they include the following: a deliberate and culpable wrong has been done to someone who is important to me, someone whom I am obliged to protect. This person ought to be punished, ought to suffer for what he has done. But what, then, are the judgements of the angry person? Again, they seem to include the belief that a deliberate wrong has been committed, that the wrong is in some way important, and that it will be good for vengeance to come to the wrongdoer. These judgements, it appears from both Seneca's account and other Stoic accounts, are sufficient for anger; indeed, on the Chrysippean view, which Seneca accepts, they are what anger *is*. But then, if the good person really has these judgements, he is angry, whether he foams at the mouth and rolls his eyes or not. The measured and diligent pursuit of revenge described here looks precisely like a type of anger—a type, moreover, that may jeopardize Seneca's attempt to link anger to excess and lack of control. If, on the other hand, the good person does not really have the judgements characteristic of the angry person, then it seems to be still an open question whether and to what degree he will pursue the offender and take risks to protect his own. (414-415)

¹⁴ That Seneca presents this challenge as a Peripatetic view is signalled by the fact that, at 1.12.3, Theophrastus is prosopopoetically introduced to support it with the words, 'Irascentur boni viri pro suorum iniuriis.'

Naturally, Nussbaum is quite right to ask what are the judgements of the good man who pursues vengeance, given the centrality of impulse, which is expressed by a judgement, in Stoic moral psychology. If a defence of Seneca's response is to be possible, it must offer a description of the good avenger's motivation that distinguishes his rational impulse from a description of the angry man's passionate impulse to cause harm. We can, moreover, ask a related question: how is it that Seneca can endorse the act of avenging one's father and mother, when, in the same work, he can condemn vengeance in the strongest terms, with a swipe at those who endorse it: 'Inhumanum verbum est et quidem pro iusto receptum ultio.'? (*De Ira* 2.32.1) If we are to preserve the coherence of Seneca's account, we must discover in it different ways in which vengeance can be understood that would account for its being sometimes just, while elsewhere the word itself is inhumane.

We can begin to resolve these worries if we consider the terms in which Seneca states the good man's obligation to respond to violence done to his parents. Here we see that he contrasts anger, as a kind of painful desire, with the unshaken, unswerving fulfilment of the son's *officium*. Moreover, there is a difference in direction between the appropriate and the inappropriate attitudes: in Seneca's assertion that the good man *non irascetur sed uindicabit, sed tuebitur*, the anger he will not feel would have the offender as its object, whereas *uindicabit* and *tuebitur* have as their object the man's injured parents. Being motivated by *pietas* instead of anger, the good son will pursue the offender for his parents' sake and to fulfil his obligation to them, not than for the sake of harm to the offender or to satisfy his own appetite for vengeance. Rather than believing 'that it would be good for vengeance to come to the wrongdoer', as Nussbaum construes his motivation, the good person believes that, given what another person has done to his family, it is right for him to respond as *pietas* demands, even if this means

attacking the wrongdoer. It is only to the extent that it is motivated by rational considerations that Seneca endorses revenge; when it is motivated by the desire to harm another human being, Seneca can still denounce it as inhuman. From a Stoic perspective, it certainly is bad for me when something happens to my family, if it happens because I have failed in my duty to protect them, and it will always be good for me to do what reason demands. To the extent that *pietas* does require some form of revenge, a good man will pursue it with exactly that as his motivation.

Another of the examples discussed by Nussbaum helps to corroborate the idea that we can distinguish a virtuous from a vicious response by considering the judgements of the responder. Seneca holds that a person acts well when she exacts a penalty because she knows she ought to, but badly when she desires the pleasure she expects from taking revenge:

‘Minus’ inquit ‘contemnemur, si uindicauerimus iniuriam.’ Si tamquam ad remedium uenimus, sine ira ueniamus, non quasi sit dulce uindicari, sed quasi utile. (*De Ira* 2.33.1)

‘If we avenge injustice,’ says someone, ‘we shall not be held in contempt.’ Yes, but if we approach it as a remedy, if we approach it without anger, treating vengeance not as something pleasant, but as something useful.

This way of putting it allows that revenge, which the angry person always desires, is only sometimes the appropriate response. To reinforce this point, Seneca tells a story illustrating the claim that revenge is in many cases so far from being the best response that, in these cases, it is better not even to acknowledge the injury:

Saepe adeo iniuriam uindicare non expedit ut ne fateri quidem expediat. C. Caesar Pastoris splendidi equitis Romani filium cum in custodia habuisset munditiis eius et cultioribus capillis offensus, rogante patre ut salutem sibi filii concederet, quasi de supplicio admonitus duci protinus iussit; ne tamen omnia inhumane faceret aduersum patrem, ad cenam illum eo die inuitauit. Uenit Pastor uultu nihil exprobrante. Propinauit illi Caesar heminam et posuit illi custodem: perdurauit miser, non aliter quam si filii sanguinem biberet. Unguentum et coronas misit et obseruare iussit an sumeret: sumpsit. Eo die quo filium extulerat, immo quo non extulerat, iacebat conuiua centesimus et potiones uix honestas natalibus liberorum podagricus senex hauriebat, cum interim non lacrimam emisit, non dolorem aliquo signo erumpere

passus est; cenauit tamquam pro filio exorasset. Quaeris quare? habebat alterum. (*De Ira* 2.33.3-4)

Often, avenging an injury is so far from being the best course that it's better not even to mention it. Once, when Gaius Caesar had in custody the son of Pastor, a distinguished Roman knight—he'd felt slighted by his neatness and his careful hairdo—upon the father's asking the favour of his son's release, he instead ordered his prompt execution, as if he'd been reminded of the penalty he'd wanted to inflict. But to prevent his treatment of the father from being entirely unkind, he invited him to dinner on the same day. Pastor came, without a hint of reproach in his expression. Caesar drank him a toast and set him a guard; the wretched man endured it, just as if he were drinking his son's blood. He set out ointments and garlands, and gave orders to watch whether he took them; take them he did. On the very day on which he had buried his son, or rather hadn't buried him, he lay one guest among a hundred, and he, a gouty old man, drank draughts that would hardly be proper on his son's birthday. Meanwhile he suffered not a tear to fall, not a sign to break out that would reveal his grief. He dined as though pleading for his son. Why, you ask? He had another.

With his son newly slaughtered by Caligula, Pastor evidently had cause for anger if there ever can be cause, so that his story also functions as a limit case. It is only care for his other son—whom Seneca, ever the rhetorician, conceals until the end of his story—that makes it right for him to behave as he did at the emperor's banquet.¹⁵ With this story, Nussbaum helpfully compares two stories told later in the *De Ira*: that of Praexaspes, who praised the drunken Cambyses' aim when, to prove he could, he had shot Praexaspes' son in the heart, (3.14) and that of Harpagus, whose ready wit found praise for the Persian king who had served him his children for dinner. (3.15) Seneca makes it clear that in these two cases, he is only drawing the conclusion that it is possible to suppress anger in even the most extreme cases, and he has no praise for the actions of these fathers; we should, however, resist the conclusion Nussbaum appears to advance, which is that Seneca is tempted, in these extreme cases, by the view he has so far opposed:

Throughout Book 3 there are quite a few examples of people not getting into political trouble because they refrained from displaying anger; and this is officially supposed to be a good thing. But Seneca cannot fully accept his own advice. He can't really say

¹⁵ By rhetorically postponing the mention of Pastor's second son, Seneca artfully highlights the difference this consideration makes to our assessment of his actions.

that these parents were right to detach themselves that much, to give into the demand for flattery as if it didn't really matter.... And, very significantly, he judges that Praexaspes, in his deferential avoidance of anger, is even worse than Cambyses, even more to be cursed by the gods. No longer a mild doctor, Seneca wishes ill to the wrongdoer: *di male perdant* is far from a medical response. (434)¹⁶

In fact, the difference between Pastor and Praexaspes is a convincing illustration of Seneca's thoughtfulness about the response to wrongdoing. Neither goes wrong by responding with anger, and yet Pastor responds rightly, and Praexaspes wrongly, to a tyrant's injustice. This is because Pastor, like the good person whose measured pursuit of vengeance Seneca has already praised, is motivated by *pietas*, whereas Praexaspes is motivated by fear:

Contempsissem Romanum patrem, si sibi timuisset: nunc iram compescuit pietas. (*De Ira* 2.33.6)

I'd hold the Roman father in contempt, if he'd been afraid for his own sake; as it was, his sense of duty curbed his anger.

Though both fathers succeed in not becoming angry, Praexaspes fails at the next step, by choosing another wrong response. His sycophantic praise of Cambyses is indeed slavish—not because he has failed in respect of anger, but because he has failed in respect of courage. Pastor, on the other hand, is praised for acting calmly and arriving at the best course of action, all things considered, and for acting with a view to a genuine good, namely, the fulfillment of his parental duty toward his surviving son.

Accounting for the difference between the angry man and the non-angry avenger in terms of the description on which he intends his action also helps to explain why Seneca claims that freedom from anger helps to guarantee the justice of a particular punishment. Not only is clemency fully compatible with attributing responsibility to the wrongdoer, but Seneca also

¹⁶ Nussbaum's remarks (434) on the 'angry words' that Seneca uses to tell these stories and the 'vehemence of his condemnations of Cambyses and the Persian king' are apt and sensitive, but we need not see these features of Seneca's language as a sign of tension in his account. As Seneca tells us, an orator will sometimes feign anger to make his point; the tone of these passages reflects this rhetorical strategy. (2.17)

presents reasons for thinking that, in contrast to the person who is angered by wrongdoing, only the non-angry person is in a position to distinguish correctly between the innocent and the guilty. The defenders of moderate anger would agree, of course, that any anger is immoderate when it is directed toward those who have not offended. For Seneca, anger is often oblivious to the difference between guilt and innocence—and this is in part because it is not subject to moderation—so that the Aristotelian goal of getting angry with the right people in the right way (NE 1126a4-6) is simply not feasible. Seneca relates an anecdote in which Plato, angry with one of his slaves, recognizes that passion impairs his judgement, and so asks Speusippus to exact punishment in his stead:

‘tu,’ inquit ‘Speusippe, seruulum istum uerberibus obiurga; nam ego irascor.’ Ob hoc non cecidit propter quod alius cecidisset. ‘Irascor’ inquit; ‘plus faciam quam oportet, libentius faciam: non sit iste seruus in eius potestate qui in sua non est.’ Aliquis uult irato committi ultionem, cum Plato sibi ipse imperium abrogauerit? Nihil tibi liceat dum irasceris. Quare? quia uis omnia licere. (*De Ira* 3.12.6-7)

‘Speusippus,’ he said, ‘you give that worthless little slave a beating to chide him. I myself am angry.’ Thus he did not stumble because another stumbled. ‘I am angry,’ he said, ‘I will do more than is right, and I will do it with more pleasure than is right: may that slave not be in the power of someone who is not in his own.’ Does anyone want revenge to be entrusted to the angry, when Plato himself abdicated that very power? Let nothing be permitted to you when you are angry. Why? Because you want everything to be permitted.

Plato’s restraint in punishing his slave accords with a general principle articulated in the *De Clementia*, in a passage where Seneca is illustrating the importance of considering punishment from one’s point of view as the responder:

Seruus imperare moderate laus est. et in mancipio cogitandum est, non quantum illud impune possit pati, sed quantum tibi permittat aequi bonique natura, quae parcere etiam captiuis et pretio paratis iubet. (*De Clem.* 1.18.1)

It is praiseworthy to be moderate in the command of slaves. Even in the case of human chattel, one must think not how much can be inflicted on them with impunity, but how much fairness and goodness permit you, which enjoin mercy even for captives and people bought for a price.

Someone who is in a position to inflict punishment on another person should not ask what the other can suffer, but what he himself can rightly inflict; in so saying, Seneca emphatically privileges response over responsibility. In Seneca's anecdote, Plato distinguishes between the (correct) impulse to punish another person according to law and the (passionate) impulse to cause that person harm. Seneca takes for granted that beating is the appropriate punishment for the slave in this story, so that it is right for Plato to make sure that he receives just this. The slave is after all a wrongdoer *ex hypothesi*, and both Seneca and the character Plato take it that it is right to impose a punishment of some kind. Plato is aware, however, that if he beats the slave while he is angry, the right punishment is not what he will impose. Someone whose impulse is described by the judgement, 'It is fitting for me to exact a just penalty,' acts with a clearer view of precisely what punishment is deserved than someone whose impulse is described by, 'I can't wait to beat the lights out of that worthless slave.' It is therefore a further implication of Seneca's position that an Aristotelian attempt to distinguish voluntary from involuntary wrongdoing, if it is understood to license anger toward voluntary injustice, is liable to undermine itself, since the passion that responds to the appearance of injustice is likely to obscure judgement about the reality of that appearance, so that distinguishing response from responsibility actually makes for a more exact, rather than a less demanding, assessment of an offender's culpability.¹⁷

¹⁷ Cf. Nussbaum's discussion, which is alert to the difference between responsibility and response, and acknowledges the potential for a blurring of the lines between the two: 'Sometimes... the response will be to sympathize with the plight of a character without blaming, whereas in other cases there may be both blame and a merciful punishment. The line is, and should be difficult to draw, for the factors that make mercy appropriate also begin to cast doubt on full moral responsibility.' (*Equity and Mercy*, 109n50) This is true as far as it goes, but it is important to add that it counts as a reason in favour of approaching another's wrong act from within a framework of moral response. If we distinguish response from responsibility, we can arrive at a response without being committed to a particular decision about another's responsibility.

Not only can an angry response easily become too violent (*cf. De Clem.* 1.1.3), but even if it involves the very same action as the infliction of merited punishment, the person who takes a vindictive pleasure in meting out the punishment will be carrying out the action in the wrong way. Seneca is persistently critical of the Aristotelian position that finds pleasure in the fulfillment of the desire for revenge:

‘At enim ira habet aliquam uoluptatem et dulce est dolorem reddere.’ Minime; non enim ut in beneficiis honestum est merita meritis repensare, ita iniurias iniuriis. Illic uinci turpe est, hic uincere. (*De Ira* 2.32.1)

‘But anger has a certain pleasure; it’s sweet to return pain for pain.’ Not in the least! It is not the case that, as with benefits, it is noble to return merit for merit, so too to return wrong for wrong. In that case it is shameful to be outdone, but in this case it is shameful to outdo.

As we saw in the last chapter, the pleasure that comes from the satisfaction of anger is central to Aristotle’s account of rectificatory justice. Because Seneca rejects it, and certainly does not believe that it could provide the appropriate motivation for the treatment of wrongdoers, he must adopt a view of punishment that is entirely different from what Aristotle espouses.

In the *De Ira*, when Seneca first alludes to his theory of punishment, it is in response to his interlocutor’s concern that the elimination of anger leaves no room for the correction of wrongdoers:

‘Quid ergo? non aliquando castigatio necessaria est?’¹⁸ Quidni? sed haec sine ira, cum ratione; non enim nocet sed medetur specie nocendi. Quemadmodum quaedam hastilia detorta ut corrigamus adurimus et adactis cuneis, non ut frangamus sed ut explicemus, elidimus, sic ingenia uitio praua dolore corporis animique corrigimus. (*De Ira* I.6.1)

‘What? Isn’t chastisement sometimes necessary?’ Who denies that? It must, however, be carried out with reason rather than anger, for it does not do harm, but rather heals under the guise of harming. Just as we heat warped spears to straighten them, and even strike them and apply wedges—not to break them, but to untwist them—so too we use physical and mental pain to correct those made crooked by vice.

¹⁸ Cf. the very similar protestation at *De Ben.* 3.17.1: ‘Quid ergo? Impunitus erit ingratus?’ (‘What? Will the ungrateful person go unpunished?’).

Throughout the *De Ira* and the *De Clementia*, Seneca underscores the importance of punishing without anger, even when a harsh physical penalty is thought to be necessary, and he urges restraint in every case where it is possible; in this passage, he goes on to compare the judge's task to that of a doctor who chooses the least intrusive treatment, and only proceeds to harsher remedies when milder ones fail. Although we have lost the precise wording of Seneca's definition of anger (in the lacuna at *De Ira* I.2), it is clear that he follows Aristotle in considering anger a desire for punishment (*cupiditas poenae*, I.2.5), and the context surrounding the lacuna makes it clear that he takes anger to aim at harm. Seneca is confident that apparently very harmful punishments, including even the death penalty, sometimes should be applied, as long as they improve moral health—'nec ulla dura uidetur curatio cuius salutaris effectus est' (I.6.2)—though because these punishments are ultimately beneficial to the victim, they are not really harm.¹⁹ Senecan punishment therefore cannot offer satisfaction of the desire for revenge, and in contrast to Aristotle's account, there is no suggestion that punishment will settle the score between the victim and the offender – instead, it is based on an entirely different kind of relationship between the offender and the person who responds to the offence.

The medical view of punishment that Seneca opposes to the retributive—*Quanto satius est sanare iniuriam quam ulcisci!* (*De Ira* 3.27.1)—has deep roots in Plato's *Gorgias*, where, in his conversation with Polus, Socrates divides statecraft (πολιτική) into legislation (νομοθετική) and justice (δικαιοσύνη) and compares each to an aspect the craft that takes care of the body. Comparing legislation to physical training, since each aims to keep the soul or the body in good condition, he associates justice with medicine, as each is charged with souls and bodies that have become diseased. (*Gorg.* 464b) Later in the same conversation, the comparison of the

¹⁹ Similarly, at *De Ben* 7.20.3, Seneca proposes that death may be conferred as a benefit on the hopelessly corrupt tyrant. Griffin and Inwood (*ad loc.*) note the relevance of *Gorgias* 525b-526c.

wrongdoer to an ailing patient proves crucial in clinching Socrates' argument for the claim that doing injustice and going unpunished is the worst thing there can be for the unjust agent.²⁰

(479a-c)

This feature of the Socratic legacy allows Seneca to claim a valuable ally in his argument for a curative model of punishment against the retributive Aristotelian view, and he does so in the immediate context of the passage just discussed: referring to an important argument from the first book of the *Republic*, Seneca employs a Socratic conclusion against the view that a good man will take satisfaction in harming the wicked. In its Platonic context, the argument was aimed at the traditional, 'Simonidean' understanding of justice, as Polemarchus presented it. Seneca, aiming both at popular views and the Peripatetic positions aligned with them, turns the argument against the Aristotelians, criticizing the pleasure that Aristotle finds in the taking of revenge:

Et Platonis argumentum adferam—quid enim nocet alienis uti ea parte qua nostra sunt? 'Uir bonus' inquit 'non laedit.' Poena laedit; bono ergo poena non conuenit, ob hoc nec ira, quia poena ira conuenit. Si uir bonus poena non gaudet, non gaudebit ne eo quidem adfectu cui poena uoluptati est; ergo non est naturalis ira. (*De Ira* 1.6.5)

I shall also bring forward an argument of Plato's—for what harm does it do to use what is others' where they are on the same side as we are? 'A good man,' he says, 'does not harm.' The infliction of punishment harms; therefore inflicting punishment does not suit a good man, and for that reason neither does anger, since inflicting punishment suits the angry man. If a good man does not delight in inflicting punishment, he will also not delight in the passion to which inflicting punishment is a source of pleasure. Therefore anger is not natural.

A Socratic—or Stoic—response to wrongdoing does not return harm for harm, but rather the benefit of instruction (cf. 2.32.1, quoted above), and in claiming this Socratic heritage for the Stoic school, Seneca has found a resource within his own tradition with which to counter the

²⁰ For discussion of this as a feature of Plato's penology, see Mary Margaret Mackenzie, *Plato on Punishment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 175-179

Peripatetic defence of anger. This is clearly signalled when Seneca attributes the view he targets to Theophrastus, only to counter it with one that is recognizably Socratic:

‘Non potest’ inquit ‘fieri’ Theophrastus ‘ut non uir bonus irascatur malis.’ Isto modo quo melior quisque, hoc iracundior erit: uide ne contra placidior solutusque adfectibus et cui nemo odio sit. Peccantis uero quid habet cur oderit, cum error illos in eiusmodi delicta conpellat? ... Quanto humanius mitem at patrium animum praestare peccantibus et illos non persequi sed reuocare! Errantem per agros ignorantia uiae melius est ad rectum iter admouere quam expellere. (1.14.1-3)

‘It is impossible,’ says Theophrastus, ‘that a good man should not become angry with the wicked.’ On that view, the better a person is, the angrier he will be. Consider whether, on the contrary, he is not more peaceable, and free from passions, and the sort who holds no one in hatred. Who has a reason to hate wrongdoers, when it is error that drives them to such misdeeds? ... How much more human it is to face wrongdoers with a kindly, paternal attitude, and not to chase them down, but to call them back! If someone wanders through your fields because he does not know his way, it is better to conduct him to the road than it is to drive him out.

A mention of Socrates himself is not far off at 1.15.3, in what seems to form the conclusion of Seneca’s reply to Theophrastus.²¹ He represents Socrates as refusing to punish a slave in anger (as in the very similar story about Plato) so that Seneca seals his case against a Peripatetic opponent by invoking the Socratic heritage of the Stoics:

Corrigendus est itaque qui peccat et admonitione et ui, et molliter et aspere, meliorque tam sibi quam aliis faciendus non sine castigatione, sed sine ira; quis enim cui medetur irascitur? ... Nil minus quam irasci punientem decet, cum eo magis ad emendationem proficiat, si iudicio †lata† est. Inde est quod Socrates seruo ait ‘caederem te, nisi irascerer’. Admonitionem serui in tempus sanius distulit, illo tempore se admonuit. Cuius erit tandem temperatus adfectus, cum Socrates non sit ausus se irae committere? (1.15.1-3)

The wrongdoer must therefore be corrected, both by reproach and by force, both gently and harshly, and to be made better for both himself and others, not without chastisement, but without anger. For who is angry with the patient he is treating? ... Nothing is less fitting than anger to someone who is carrying out punishment, since it will be more successful in causing improvement if it is administered judiciously. This is why Socrates told his slave, ‘I would beat you, if I weren’t angry.’ He delayed reproaching his slave until he could do so more soberly; for the time being, he reproached himself. Who, then, can lay claim to moderate passion, when Socrates did not venture to trust himself to anger?

²¹ Moreover, where Seneca’s moral *exempla* involve commendable philosophical actors, the protagonist is usually Socrates (1.15.3, 2.7.1, 3.11.2, 3.13.3) or Plato (2.21.10, 3.12.5-7), whereas the bad example of Alexander is pointedly proffered as Aristotle’s pupil (3.17.1; of course, it is just such guilt by association that still plagues Seneca’s own reputation).

In the passages we have just seen, Seneca's curative model of punishment is supported by the Socratic claim that *no one does wrong willingly*. This does not undermine Seneca's claim that a merciful or non-angry response is compatible with the recognition of genuine wrongdoing, but it does underwrite a different way of responding to it. Where human faultiness is the problem, Seneca proposes reacting in a way that is specifically appropriate to this fact, which is to correct and improve the erring wherever possible.

Just now we have seen how Seneca invokes the Stoics' Socratic heritage in his criticism of the Aristotelian defense of anger. In another respect, however, Seneca has appeared to some readers to drift toward, rather than away from, an Aristotelian approach. The classic recognition of the law's inability to judge precisely of particular cases is Aristotle's discussion of ἐπιείκεια, and for this reason Seneca has sometimes been thought to incline toward ἐπιείκεια in his account of clemency. This view has been encouraged by a report of earlier Stoic views in Diogenes Laertius, but it overestimates both the similarity between *clementia* and ἐπιείκεια and the divergence between Seneca and the report in DL, which differ in emphasis rather than in doctrine. Though it might be easily assumed that ἐπιείκεια is a virtue of judges, Aristotle appears to apply the label to prosecutors, and perhaps primarily to them.²² In this sense, the ἐπιεικής is said to be ἐλαττωτικός, or not such as to press his claim, but this does not amount to mercifully remitting a penalty in order to improve the offender. The same description applies to the ἐπιεικής whether he is pursuing punishment (1138a1) or taking his share of goods distributed from a common store (1136b21). Here, as described earlier, Aristotle is basing his

²² For instance, Aristotle says that the equitable person is inclined to seek decisions from an arbitrator, and also that the arbitrator himself will look to what is equitable. (*Rhetoric* 1374b19-23) On the role of the arbitrator, see *Ath. Pol.* 53.

account of rectificatory justice on the model of distributive justice: the fair or equitable person is prepared to pass over some things to which he is legally entitled in exchange for other goods, such as honour (1136b22). Similarly, he may be motivated by several considerations to refrain from taking revenge to the fullest extent to which the law would support him, being satisfied when he exacts punishment to a lesser degree than what the law would have permitted. This does not mean that the equitable person has not desired revenge to the extent he understands the offence to have warranted it; it does not mean that, as a matter of policy or principle, he will exercise leniency in cases where his legal entitlement corresponds to what he really thinks he ought to claim in the context of the dispute.²³

As Aristotle describes the virtue of ἐπιείκεια, its role is mainly to respond to the law's inability to address all possible situations. It modulates the response to wrongdoing based on a fair assessment of particular circumstances and of the offender's responsibility, to which it remains firmly tied. In contrast, *clementia* does not depend entirely on the offender's responsibility, but modulates responses to wrongdoing in a way that does not always depend on the determination of voluntariness or guilt. In the previous chapter, I noted that Aristotle's account of ἐπιείκεια relies on the assumption that someone responding to wrongdoing in a particular situation will have the knowledge that is unavailable to the lawgiver. As the steady equanimity that Seneca commends to the judge or prosecutor is the same whether the accused is guilty or not, and as it is often impossible to be certain whether a wrong act was really

²³ For a different contrast between *clementia* and ἐπιείκεια, see Griffin, *Seneca: A Philosopher in Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 159-162, who cites Fuhrmann, *Gym.* 70 (1963), 512 and Adam, *Clementia Principis*, pp. 36 ff.; 90. Nussbaum (*Equity and Mercy* 97) treats Senecan mercy as sharing in the tradition of Aristotelian equity, but notes the important difference made by Aristotle's endorsement of retribution.

voluntary, it is an advantage of a non-angry, Stoic response to wrongdoing that it does not depend on the possibility of making this assessment.

If Seneca's position is not as close to Aristotle's as has sometimes been estimated, it is also closer to traditional Stoic positions than has usually been appreciated.²⁴ The leading piece of evidence for the claim that earlier Stoics took a stricter view of judgement is the following report from Diogenes Laertius:

οὐ μόνον δ' ἐλευθέρους εἶναι τοὺς σοφοὺς, ἀλλὰ καὶ βασιλέας, τῆς βασιλείας οὐσης ἀρχῆς ἀνυπευθύνου, ἥτις περὶ μόνους ἂν τοὺς σοφοὺς συσταίῃ, καθά φησι Χρύσιππος ἐν τῷ Περὶ τοῦ κυρίως κεχρησθαι Ζήνωνα τοῖς ὀνόμασιν· ἐγνωκέναι γάρ φησι δεῖν τὸν ἄρχοντα περὶ ἀγαθῶν καὶ κακῶν, μηδένα δὲ τῶν φαύλων ἐπίστασθαι ταῦτα. ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ἀρχικοὺς δικαστικούς τε καὶ ῥητορικοὺς μόνους εἶναι, τῶν δὲ φαύλων οὐδένα. ἔτι καὶ ἀναμαρτήτους, τῷ ἀπεριπτώτους εἶναι ἀμαρτήματι. ἀβλαβεῖς τ' εἶναι· οὐ γὰρ ἄλλους βλάπτειν οὐθ' αὐτούς. ἐλεήμονάς τε μὴ εἶναι συγγνώμην τ' ἔχειν μηδενί· μὴ γὰρ παρίεναι τὰς ἐκ τοῦ νόμου ἐπιβαλλούσας κολάσεις, ἐπεὶ τό γ' εἴκειν καὶ ὁ ἔλεος αὐτῇ θ' ἡ ἐπιείκεια οὐδένειά ἐστι ψυχῆς πρὸς κολάσεις προσποιουμένης χρηστότητα· μηδ' οἶσθαι σκληροτέρας αὐτὰς εἶναι. (D.L. 7.122-123)

They say not only that sages are free, but that they are kings, since kingship is rule that is not subject to giving accounts, and this can only exist in the case of sages, as Chrysippus says in his work 'On Zeno's use of words in their principal sense': for he says that the ruler must have gained a knowledge of goods and evils, and no inferior person knows these things. Likewise they say that sages alone are fit to rule, to judge, and to speak in public, and that no inferior person is. And that they are unerring, by virtue of not being prone to error. And that they do no harm, as they neither harm others nor themselves. And that they do not feel pity and that they don't pardon anyone; for they do not remit the punishments prescribed by law, since yielding, like pity and yieldingness itself, is the worthless quality of a soul that feigns kindness in the face of punishment; sages, moreover, do not think that the punishments are too severe.

This report appears to relate a much harsher version of Stoic teaching on the judgement of wrongdoers, but this appearance is merely due to the fact that, unlike Seneca's, the account it

²⁴ For the claim that Seneca differs substantially from earlier Stoic views, see Griffin, *Seneca: A Philosopher in Politics*, 158-161, citing the passage below. Griffin is followed by Braund, *Seneca: De Clementia*, 66-68, who contrasts Seneca with 'the hardline Stoic position'. A similarly sharp contrast between Seneca and the Greek Stoics is present also in Nussbaum, *Equity and Mercy*, 97-100.

describes is built on a series of truisms arising from the the nature of the sage. Where sages are kings, the law is perfect; in order to understand the passage at hand, we must recognize that this is true not only in the sense that all the laws in such a city would be just, but that they would also be perfectly modulated to deal appropriately with the varying particulars of individual cases. The sage, who is the only true king and judge, can rule without answering to anyone because his decisions are right by stipulation, and it is impossible that his judgements should deviate from the strictest letter of his own law, since both are made in accordance with his own complete wisdom.²⁵ Thus the view recorded by Diogenes amounts to holding that the sage will always punish when he should punish, and this is no different from the view that Seneca holds in the *De Clementia*. Rather than contradicting previous Stoic accounts of the sage's strictness—and far from introducing a shift toward Aristotelian ἐπιείκεια—Seneca enriches the existing Stoic theory by elaborating a framework for responding to wrongdoing that answers the needs of non-sage actors as well. Whatever view of the sage may lie behind the meagre doxographical report in Diogenes Laertius, it has no advice for average agents—or, more to the point, non-sages with an extraordinary degree of political power—trying to arrive at the correct response to a crime from their own epistemically imperfect perspectives. The judges Seneca describes will operate within a real-world legal framework, and it is hardly clear from the report in Diogenes Laertius how the sage who is described there will account for this. After all, that view assumes that the law will unambiguously provide for a single penalty that applies definitively to a given crime, but absent a perfectly coherent and comprehensive body of law such as only sages could

²⁵ Cf. *Ecl.* ii.102.8-9, where, as Inwood, 'Rules and Reasoning in Stoic Ethics' notes, 'the wise man is said to be law-abiding just because he is the only proper interpreter of the law.' (*Reading Seneca*, 101n17)

establish, it would be downright naive to assume that the law will regulate particular cases so closely.²⁶

Moreover, the sage can punish with strictness because he is a reliable judge of whether, and to what degree, other agents are responsible for their wrong actions. As a condition of this, the sage must certainly depend on his knowledge that, as Chrysippus showed, the determined ordering of the universe is compatible with full moral responsibility for wrongdoing.²⁷ What is crucial to the later Stoic account of moral response is the realization that the sage also depends for his judgements of others on an ability to assess each person's *particular* responsibility for a given deed. The sage can *always* answer the question of responsibility, but non-sages sometimes need to respond to wrongdoing even when they cannot answer this question, and the kind of response Seneca prescribes is appropriate to the condition of a non-sage who recognizes his own fallibility. The sage can respond with perfect strictness to the offender she is judging, because she has knowledge of right and wrong and because she is reliably capable of evaluating another person's responsibility for his wrong action.²⁸ The sage as he is described in this passage will not 'feign kindness in the face of punishment', and neither will the ruler who follows Seneca's advice. But unlike the sage, an everyday moral actor, in responding to another's wrongdoing, is faced with what we could call a 'moral-epistemological gap' between his imperfect assessment of the offender's responsibility (and even of the rightness or wrongness of an allegedly unjust action) and the degree of certainty required to justify imposing the strictest penalty. Clemency functions as a strategy for addressing this gap by treating the situation as a matter of

²⁶ The contrast between sages and ordinary judges is very helpfully developed by Inwood, 'Moral Judgement in Seneca', 207-218

²⁷ For a detailed reconstruction of Chrysippean compatibilism, see Bobzien, ch. 6 of *Freedom and Determinism in Stoic Philosophy*, especially pp. 242-272

²⁸ Inwood, 'Moral Judgement in Seneca', 215

interpersonal moral response. In contrast to the god's-eye-view that is available to the sage—who is, after all, 'Zeus' intellectual equal'²⁹—clemency takes an interpersonal stance toward another's wrongdoing, and in determining the response to wrongdoing, works from the position of the responder.

Once again, Seneca's contribution depends on distinguishing the consideration of how one should respond to the offender from the determination of the offender's guilt, and thereby reorients the discussion toward the practical-ethical question of response. Whereas in the report of Diogenes Laertius, punishment is understood to follow directly from a conviction according to law, Seneca treats the determination of guilt as one stage requiring respect for the standards encompassed by justice, and the judge's response as a separate stage that requires the exercise of specifically appropriate virtues, including clemency and, more generally, the control of anger. A sage in judgement will always arrive at the correct decision, and as Seneca knows, such a judge does not need his advice to get there. Seneca's final prescription, that a judge should impose a just penalty and not be swayed by sentiment to make it more or less harsh than it ought to be, is line with earlier Stoic prescriptions, but adapts them to suit Seneca's avowedly practical purposes. Because it characterizes the *response*, clemency can allow for imperfection in the assessment of *responsibility* without detriment to the reliability of the practical judgment it reaches.

Like Seneca's insistence that a good man will improve rather than harm the wrongdoer, the acknowledgement of epistemic imperfection involved in the response he prescribes is deeply

²⁹ Inwood, 'Moral Judgement in Seneca', 223.

Socratic.³⁰ Even the sage will remember her formerly faulty nature, and keep in mind that ignorance is the general condition of humanity.³¹

Non irascetur sapiens peccantibus. Quare? quia scit neminem nasci sapientem sed fieri, scit paucissimos onmi aevo sapientis euadere, quia condicionem humanae uitae perspectam habet; nemo autem naturae sanus irascitur. Quid enim si mirari uelit non in siluestris dumis poma pendere? Quid si miretur spineta sentesque non utili aliqua fruge conpleri? Nemo irascitur ubi uitium natura defendit. Placidus itaque sapiens et aequus erroribus, non hostis sed corrector peccantium, hoc cotidie procedit animo: ‘multi mihi occurrent uino dediti, multi libinosi, multi ingrati, multi auari, multi furiis ambitionis agitati.’ Omnia ista tam propitius aspiciet quam aegros suos medicus. (*De Ira* 2.10.6-7³²)

The sage will not be angry with wrongdoers. Why? Because he knows that no one is born a sage, but must become one, and he knows that only the tiniest number of sages have ever existed in any age, since he has taken a comprehensive view of the condition of human life. Indeed, no one in his right mind becomes angry with nature. What if he should wonder that apples don’t grow on thorny woodland shrubs? Or be amazed that brambles and briars don’t abound with useful fruit? No one becomes angry in cases where nature stands up for the vice. And so the sage is peaceable and level-headed in the face of errors, not the enemy of wrongdoers but their corrector. Every day he sets out with this in mind: ‘I shall encounter many who are given to wine, many who are fond of pleasure, many who are ungrateful, many who are greedy, many who are driven by the furies of ambition.’ He looks on all these conditions as favourably as a doctor looks upon his patients.

Here the sage’s acquaintance with the faulty condition of humanity allows her to take a perspective on it that is like the one he takes on the rest of nature: that the world is the way it is, and that it is filled as it is with erring human agents, will not be a matter of surprise for the sage.³³ Were we to understand it as referring to the offender’s responsibility for his crime, the phrase *uitium natura defendit* would surely be shocking. For a Stoic, any vice is contrary to

³⁰ For an illustration of this from Plato’s works, we might adduce *Gorgias* 470d9, where Socrates will not say whether he thinks the tyrant Archelaus is happy because he does not know the man; he only agrees that he is miserable *if* he is unjust. (471a1-3)

³¹ Both the non-sage’s admission of his own ignorance and the sage’s recognition that of ignorance’s generality evoke well-known Socratic precedents, particularly in Plato’s *Apology*. (e.g. 21b-22e)

³² On this passage see the remarks of Inwood, ‘Moral Judgement in Seneca’, 207-208

³³ Cf. the report in DL that the sage will not be surprised by even the most spectacular natural phenomena: ἔτι γε τὸν σοφὸν οὐδὲν θαυμάζειν τῶν δοκούντων παραδόξων, οἷον χαρώνεια καὶ ἀμπώτιδας καὶ πηγὰς θερμῶν ὕδατων καὶ πυρὸς ἀναφυσήματα. (DL 7.123 = *SVF* III.642) (It is for good reason that the doctor appears here in this passage: her scientific knowledge of the human body means that her patients’ illnesses do not take her by surprise.) cf. Marcus 2.1, 4.6

nature, and moreover, the natural order of things, which is identical with fate and the divine will, provides no excuse for wrongdoing, so that Seneca certainly cannot mean that nature provides an excuse for the wrongdoer. Rather, this paradoxical claim is meant to improve the response to wrongdoing by serving as a reminder that, on a cosmic level, the fact of human wrongdoing cannot be otherwise. The compatibility of cosmic providence with the moral responsibility of human agents had been demonstrated by Chrysippus for the Stoic school, and Seneca takes very little interest in the problem, probably because he thought the matter settled.³⁴ When Seneca appeals to the idea that human wrongdoing is an inevitable fact of nature—just as much as the fact that briars have no edible fruit—he is writing from the responder’s perspective.³⁵ (To put this another way: while reflecting on the inevitability of human wrongdoing can allay the anger of one person at another’s wrongdoing, the wrongdoer certainly could not justify his actions by telling himself that error is an inevitable part of human existence.) Because he sees individual actions from this cosmic perspective, the sage reacts without surprise or disturbance, as he would to any other fact of nature. Thus when the sage responds to a particular instance of humanity’s generally faulty tendency, he can view that particular action *sub specie aeternitatis*, so that, from his perspective as the responder, it is no occasion for distress or for anger. Taking these considerations together, the recognition of general human fallibility contributes substantially to the elimination of anger, and to its disqualification from among possible justified responses to wrongdoing. When the non-sage combines this general perspective with

³⁴ cf. Inwood, ‘Seneca and Psychological Dualism’ p. 56

³⁵ This argument is closely akin to what Seneca says about fear while introducing his account of earthquakes in NQ VI: the knowledge that the earth beneath us is prone to collapsing offers the kind of solace offered by the knowledge that escape from danger is utterly impossible (and here Seneca quotes Vergil (*Aen.* 2.354): *una salus victis nullam sperare salutem.*) That is, just as Seneca maintains the awareness of how often people do wrong is a cure for anger, as a cure for fear he proposes keeping mind just how many things can kill us. (2.6.1-5) In either case, by knowing the way the world is, an informed agent entertains only reasonable expectations of what can occur.

the very personal acknowledgement of his own fault, he recognizes in himself another token of a wicked type, and this matters to the choice of a correct response.

In the sage, this cosmic perspective follows from a perfect understanding of the world-order, but a similarly general perspective is available to the non-sage as well. Commending such a perspective to his reader, Seneca writes:

Ne singulis irascaris, uniuersis ignoscendum est, generi humano uenia tribuenda est.³⁶
Si irasceris iuuenibus senibusque quod peccant, irascere infantibus: peccaturi sunt.
Numquis irascitur pueris, quorum aetas nondum nouit rerum discrimina? maior est
excusatio et iustior hominem esse quam puerum. (*De Ira* 2.10.2)

To avoid being angry with particular men, you must pardon mankind universally; you must have mercy on the human race. If you are angry with the young and old because they do wrong, be angry with babies, because they are going to do wrong. No one gets angry with children, do they, who are too young to understand distinctions? It is a greater and a better plea that one is a human being, than that one is a child.

Here too, Seneca's claims may appear scandalous: how can it be that being human provides an excuse (*excusatio*) for wrongdoing? What should we make of Seneca's comparison of the wrongdoer to a child? For children really do have an excuse for wrongdoing: with their rational faculties as yet undeveloped, they are constitutionally incapable of making distinctions (*aetas nondum nouit rerum discrimina*)—and in fact Seneca recognizes that infants have not yet done wrong, though he is confident that once their faculties develop, they will. For as long as one is a child, however, one's immaturity really does provide an excuse, in the robust, exculpatory sense: what can Seneca mean by saying that the fact of one's humanity is an even better excuse than this, unless he is prepared to slide into 'across the board excusing or condoning', as Griswold has put it?³⁷ To make sense of Seneca's claim, we must take full account of the fact that he is discussing another person's view of the wrongdoer, so that *excusatio* means not

³⁶ cf. Marcus 9.42.4: ἅμα γὰρ τῷ ὑπομνησθαι, ὅτι τὸ γένος τῶν τοιούτων ἀδύνατόν ἐστι μὴ ὑπάρχειν, εὐμενέστερος ἔσθι πρὸς τοὺς καθ' ἓνα.

³⁷ Griswold, *Forgiveness*, 82, where he expresses concern about the argument from 'shared fallibility'.

‘exculpatory consideration’ but ‘reason to withdraw resentment’. This consideration is ‘greater’ and ‘more just’ in that it takes a greater moral effort on the part of the responder to countenance the humanity of another person in the midst of his wrongdoing than it does to recognize that an infant cannot bear moral guilt, and also because it recognizes that even when a human being errs, she still retains the developed rationality in virtue of which she is a member of the moral community. Thus a correct response will treat the wrongdoer with all the patience appropriate to a child, and all the respect appropriate to a mature adult.

Epictetus: Self and Others

Die Ethik des Stoikers Epiktet, A. F. Bonhöffer's monumental work on Epictetus' ethics and the companion to his earlier *Epiktet und die Stoa*, stands out among scholarly works in, among other respects, its unrelenting concern for the moral life of a human being. This guiding concern of Bonhöffer's is no doubt what drew him, as a preacher himself, to the *Discourses*, and was surely confirmed by his deep reading of Epictetus. Bonhöffer follows Epictetus in rejecting dry scholasticism and amoral philological study (4.6ff., 3.23.20-21) in favour of a genuine guide to living rightly. (1.29.55-57) His evident admiration for the 'slave from Hierapolis' whose Stoic doctrines 'form an inalienable component of every true moral outlook', and by whom they were 'preached with special warmth and vigour' (162), shines on every page of his study, which glows with all the sincerity of one who aims to reform his reader's character. Bonhöffer, however, owes no Stoic allegiance, and the project of evaluating Epictetus' moral system at the same time as he describes it pervades his study; though the work frequently betrays its author's desire to affirm 'the superior truth of Christianity' (160), this prejudice is not so strong as to mar Bonhöffer's overall very sympathetic consideration of Epictetus. For all that his judgement is balanced and humane, however, Bonhöffer nevertheless reserves a strikingly negative assessment for Epictetus' view of the correct response to the wrongdoing of others, calling it the 'deepest deficiency of Epictetan and Stoic ethics... that it teaches one rather to laugh at sin as foolishness than to treat it with moral indignation.' (69) He regards the Stoic doctrine of *apatheia* as an aberration, or at best as an exaggeration, and cautions his reader that the rejection of anger in particular does not do justice to the requirements of human nature.¹ He likewise

¹ Bonhöffer, *Die Ethik des Stoikers Epiktet* (Stuttgart: F. Enke, 1894), 101-102. For a short history of similar charges of 'unnaturalness' against Epictetus in the modern period, see Long 261-268

counts the belief that no one does wrong willingly among the consequences of a ‘one-sided intellectualism’ (160), and holds that without becoming angry at wrongdoing, the Stoic will fail to confront injustice as he ought:

Damit [viz. with the claim that the wrongdoer sins unwillingly] hängt unmittelbar zusammen die andre Unwahrheit, dass es keinen berechtigten Zorn über die Sünde giebt, wodurch dem Kampf gegen die moralischen Schäden der Menschheit und dem Drang nach bessernder Einwirkung auf dieselbe die Flügel beschnitten werden. (159)

For Bonhöffer, the ‘falsehood’ by which Stoics deny that anger is justified undermines the urge to improve human beings, and by ‘clipping the wings’ of moral indignation, deprives the philosopher of the resources he needs in the struggle against sin.² Thus, though Bonhöffer acknowledges that the correction of the wrongdoer is Epictetus’ stated goal, he holds that the rejection of anger cancels both the motive and the means for this endeavour.

As A.A. Long has observed, Bonhöffer’s full and authoritative treatment of Epictetus pays comparatively little attention to the style and method of the *Discourses*, or to the pervasive presence of Socrates in these works.³ By contrast Long himself (in a work which, after more than a century, has at last surpassed Bonhöffer’s as the most important scholarly study of Epictetus) has thoroughly demonstrated the cardinal importance of the Socratic model for Epictetus’ philosophical practice. While Long’s study is primarily interested in the presence of Socratic dialogue and dialectic in Epictetus, attention to Epictetus’ use of Socrates can also provide a corrective to Bonhöffer’s assessment of his treatment of wrongdoing, since an important benefit of the ‘Socratic paradigm’ is that the figure of Socrates offers a model of

² In fact, Bonhöffer counts it to Epictetus’ credit that at times he appears to forget his own prohibitions against anger, ‘as for instance when he denounces the adulterer in tones of the highest moral indignation’ (159). Bonhöffer is referring to *Diss.* 2.4, though this cross, scatological tirade hardly sustains his description.

³ Long, *Epictetus: A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 93. Bonhöffer does acknowledge in a footnote (113) that the moral example of Socrates figures pervasively in Epictetus’ work; as Long’s work as shown, however, the influence of Socrates on Epictetus’ philosophical project is far more substantial and wide-reaching than this.

dispassionate, interpersonal response to the moral failings of other people. Many Socratic claims, as Epictetus interprets them, provide a sound basis for the elimination of anger, while his elenctic practice (the Epictetan importance of which is so admirably drawn out by Long) also offers an attractive model of meaningful engagement with the wrongdoer, which, so far from passively accepting injustice, aims constantly to improve the wrongdoer for his or her own sake. Thus it resists the conflicts engendered by the desire to return harm for harm, but also mounts an active and vigorous resistance against injustice. To promote this activity, Epictetus adopts an interpersonal perspective on the response to wrongdoing, which is substantially mediated by his reading of Platonic dialogues that hold a special importance for him, particularly the *Apology*, the *Gorgias*, and the first book of the *Republic*, as well as, at times, the Socratic works of Xenophon. This perspective allows Epictetus to take seriously the wrongness of another's action (and his or her guilt or responsibility for having brought it about) without resorting to anger to respond to the crime. The Socratic style of correction he proposes involves a meaningful acknowledgement of the rational agency behind the other person's action. Just as Socrates, in the course of elenctic refutation, uses dialectic to engage rationally with an opponent and so to bring him to see his own errors, the Stoic who responds to wrongdoing as he should will approach the task of philosophical correction with due regard both for his own rationality and for the wrongdoer's. The humane and dispassionate character of the Socratic response to wrongdoing is, for Epictetus, a reflection of his hero's understanding that nothing but the ethical operations of his own mind can do him good or ill, while the courage and vigour with which Socrates confronts injustice offers an answer to anyone who doubts that such a view is compatible with active, morally sensitive interpersonal attitudes.

The flagship passage for Long's discussion of the Socratic paradigm in Epictetus presents Socrates not only as an intellectual influence, but also as the model of a philosophically informed life with other people:

Ὁ καλὸς καὶ ἀγαθὸς οὔτ' αὐτὸς μάχεται τινὶ οὔτ' ἄλλον ἐξ κατὰ δύναμιν.
Παράδειγμα δὲ καὶ τούτου καθάπερ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἔκκειται ἡμῖν ὁ βίος ὁ
Σωκράτους, ὃς οὐ μόνον αὐτὸς πανταχοῦ ἐξέφυγεν μάχην, ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἄλλους
μάχεσθαι εἶα. Ὅρα παρὰ Ξενοφῶντι ἐν τῇ Συμποσίῳ πόσας μάχας λέλυκεν, πῶς
πάλιν ἠνέσχετο Θρασυμάχου, πῶς Πώλου, πῶς Καλλικλέους, πῶς τῆς γυναικὸς
ἠνείχετο, πῶς τοῦ υἱοῦ ἐξελεγχόμενος ὑπ' αὐτοῦ, σοφίζόμενος. Λίαν γὰρ ἀσφαλῶς
ἐμνήμετο ὅτι οὐδεὶς ἄλλοτρίου ἡγεμονικοῦ κυριεύει.

The honourable and good man neither fights with anyone himself, nor, so far as he can, does he let anyone else do so. Of this as of everything the life of Socrates is available to us as a model, who not only himself avoided fighting everywhere, but did not let others fight. Notice in Xenophon's *Symposium* how many fights he has resolved, and again how he put up with Thrasymachus, Polus and Callicles, how he put up with his wife, and with his son when he argued with him like a sophist. For he kept utterly secure in mind the thought that no one controls another's commanding-faculty. (*Diss.* 4.5.1-4, tr. Long, with additions)

Through close attention to the style and method of the *Discourses*, Long establishes that forms of dialogue and *elenchus* are crucial to the philosophy of Epictetus. In contrast to Bonhöffer's, Long's Epictetus is less a preacher than a classroom philosophy teacher who, in addition to his school's curriculum, engages in lively, goading, and sometimes caustic exchanges with his students, aimed at getting them to acknowledge their own confusion and the inadequacy of their moral outlook, and inspired in large part by the methods Socrates adopts in his conversations with Polus, Callicles and others.⁴ With this recognition accomplished, Epictetus can, like Socrates, proceed to encourage his students to reorient their attention toward what matters most. The passage that introduces Long's account of the Socratic paradigm will also serve as the starting-point for our discussion in this chapter, which builds on his study by showing how, in addition to informing Epictetus' philosophical practice, the example of Socrates helps Epictetus

⁴ Long, *Epictetus*, 67-86, 101-103

to advance the Stoic ideal of *apatheia*—particularly with regard to anger—by promoting him as a model for interpersonal conduct in situations where conflict and hostility often arise. This most explicit of Epictetus’ appeals to Socrates is quite clearly made in support of mild and peaceable relations with others, and in particular with the erring.⁵ Epictetus invokes Socrates’ response to some of the most trying antagonists in Plato’s dialogues, people who are badly mistaken about the most important things, and who quickly become angry when they try to defend their views. For Epictetus, what keeps Socrates from responding with hostility, or from turning his own anger against theirs, is his realization that these others are in no position to control his own faculty of assent, his *hegemonikon*—and, moreover, that he cannot control theirs.

Below, I will argue that though Epictetus uses Stoic language to characterize the Socrates of Plato and Xenophon, his claim does reflect his own sensitive reading of these Socratic sources. First, however, it is worth considering just how awareness of the independence of each person’s *hegemonikon* can be understood to promote properly peaceful interpersonal relations. This is because, for Epictetus, only what depends on us can be good or bad. Consequently, due attention to the *hegemonikon*’s independence entails a perspective on action and reaction that allows one person to formulate her own response to another person’s error without believing that that the badness of another’s action has a bearing on her own happiness. Seeing the situation in this way, the agent can focus on her own response, which is up to her, without allowing herself to be upset by an external event that has value only inasmuch as it

⁵ Cf. 2.12.14-16, where Epictetus calls it ‘the first and most characteristic quality of Socrates’ that he never returned abuse for abuse, but instead put up with insolent people and settled conflict. Here again he refers to Xenophon’s *Symposium* for support.

offers the responding agent an opportunity for rational activity. Epictetus makes this clear when, at 4.12.8-9, he repeats and rephrases the maxim we have seen him attribute to Socrates:

— Τίσιν οὖν δεῖ με προσέχειν; — Πρῶτον μὲν ἐκείνοις τοῖς καθολικοῖς καὶ ἐκεῖνα πρόχειρα ἔχειν καὶ χωρὶς ἐκείνων μὴ καθεύδειν, μὴ ἀνίστασθαι, μὴ πίνειν, μὴ ἐσθίειν, μὴ συμβάλλειν ἀνθρώποις· ὅτι προαιρέσεως ἀλλοτριᾶς κύριος οὐδεὶς, ἐν ταύτῃ δὲ μόνῃ τάγαθόν καὶ κακόν. Οὐδεὶς οὖν κύριος οὔτ' ἀγαθόν μοι περιποιῆσαι οὔτε κακῶ με περιβαλεῖν, ἀλλ' ἐγὼ αὐτὸς ἐμαυτοῦ κατὰ ταῦτα ἐξουσίαν ἔχω μόνος. ὅταν οὖν ταῦτα ἀσφαλῆ μοι ᾖ, τί ἔχω περὶ τὰ ἐκτὸς ταρασσεσθαι; ποῖος τύραννος φοβερός, ποία νόσος, ποία πενία, ποῖον πρόσκρουσμα;

— To which things should I give my attention, then? — First to those general maxims, and you should keep them to hand, and without them you should not sleep, not wake, not eat, drink or associate with other people: that no one has authority over another person's *prohairesis*, and that good and bad are in this alone. Therefore no one has the authority to bring about good for me or to involve me in what is bad; I alone have power over myself in these respects. So when these things are secure for me, what is there to trouble me concerning externals? What kind of tyrant is fearsome, what kind of sickness, what kind poverty, what kind of stumbling-block?

This passage directly links the independence of each person's mind (here described as the *prohairesis* rather than the *hegemonikon*) to the Stoic denial that there is unqualified value in external things. Because good and bad are in the *prohairesis* alone, and because the *prohairesis* cannot be controlled by the actions of another person, its independence guarantees that one person cannot be harmed by another.⁶ The actions of another can therefore never be the reasonable cause of emotional upheaval, and this makes the perspective that Epictetus models on Socrates a distinctively Stoic one. Because only the activity of the *prohairesis* itself can be good or bad, and because it falls to the *prohairesis* to respond to external events, but not to control them, responding correctly to others' wrongdoing requires distinguishing between two distinct perspectives, namely the wrongdoer's perspective, from which the wrong action really is something bad, and one's own as the responder, from which it is neither.

⁶ For the explicit statement that one person cannot harm another, see also 4.13.8.

The importance of this difference in perspective can be seen from the fact that Epictetus frequently invokes it to help his students and interlocutors respond to the errors and passions of other people. In a particularly revealing instance, Epictetus is consulted by a man who wishes to cause his brother to stop being angry with him:

(1) Συμβουλευομένου τινὸς πῶς τὸν ἀδελφὸν πείσῃ μηκέτι χαλεπῶς αὐτῷ ἔχειν· (2) Οὐκ ἐπαγγέλλεται, ἔφη, φιλοσοφία τῶν ἐκτός τι περιποιήσῃ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ· εἰ δὲ μὴ, ἔξω τι τῆς ἰδίας ὕλης ἀναδέξεται. Ὡς γὰρ τέκτονος ὕλη τὰ ξύλα, ἀνδριαντοποιοῦ ὁ χαλκός, οὕτως τῆς περὶ βίον τέχνης ὕλη ὁ βίος αὐτοῦ ἐκάστου. (3) — Τί οὖν τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ; — Πάλιν τῆς αὐτοῦ ἐκείνου τέχνης ἐστίν, πρὸς δὲ τὴν σὴν τῶν ἐκτός ἐστίν, ὅμοιον ἀγρῷ, ὅμοιον ὑγείᾳ, ὅμοιον εὐδοξίᾳ. Τούτων δ' οὐδὲν ἐπαγγέλλεται φιλοσοφία. (4) « Ἐν πάσῃ περιστάσει τηρήσω τὸ ἡγεμονικὸν κατὰ φύσιν ἔχον. » Τὸ τίνας; « Τὸ ἐκείνου ἐν ᾧ εἰμί. » (5) — Πῶς οὖν ἐκεῖνός μοι μὴ ὀργίζεται; — Φέρε μοι ἐκεῖνον κάκεῖνῳ ἐρῷ, σοὶ δὲ περὶ τῆς ἐκείνου ὀργῆς οὐδὲν ἔχω λέγειν. (*Diss.* 1.15.1-5)

When someone was consulting him as to how he could get his brother to stop being angry with him, ‘It is not the promise,’ he said, ‘of philosophy to bring about any external thing for a person: if this were not so, it would set to work on something external to its own proper material. For just as the carpenter’s material is lumber, and the sculptor’s is bronze, so too the material of the craft of life is each person’s own life.’ ‘What about my brother’s life, then?’ ‘Again, it’s the material of his own craft, but to yours it is external, like a field, like health, like a good reputation. Philosophy promises none of these things. *In every circumstance I will watch over the commanding faculty to keep it in accordance with nature.* Whose? *That of the one in whom I am.*’ ‘Well, how is he to stop being angry with me?’ ‘Bring him to me and I’ll speak to him, but I have nothing to say to you about his anger.’

Here, Epictetus’ interlocutor is right to think that he needs to respond to his brother’s anger, but wrong to think he can simply make it stop. The advice Epictetus gives to this man is that he should keep in mind the very thing that, in his view, kept Socrates calm in the face of angry interlocutors like Polus, Callicles and Thrasymachus (*Diss.* 4.5.3), namely that each person’s rational faculty is fully free of another person’s control, a claim he states here in terms of the distinction between externals and what is within us.⁷ When Epictetus explains that philosophy,

⁷ Epictetus treats ‘what is up to us’ and the ‘the condition of the *prohairesis*’ equivalently as descriptions of our good. Long (211-212) argues cogently against treating *prohairesis* and *hegemonikon* as synonymous in Epictetus, on the grounds that, though the two terms overlap when they refer to human beings, *hegemonikon* can describe animal as well as rational souls, while *prohairesis* picks out a more restricted aspect the soul, confined to human

as the art of living, cannot promise anything outside the realm of what is up to us, since only that is the ‘material’ of its art, his interlocutor replies that his brother’s anger does fall under the art of living because, after all, it is up to his brother.⁸ This is not a trivial objection, and it prompts Epictetus to articulate an important feature of the distinction between externals and what is up to us, which is that it depends on a personal perspective: that is, this distinction governs not only the general difference between what can and cannot be controlled by human beings, but also the difference between what is controlled by one particular person and what is controlled by another.⁹ Becoming angry falls within the realm of what is up to us, but whether one’s brother becomes angry is only up to one’s brother. Accordingly, the advice Epictetus offers to his interlocutor is different from what he would offer to the man’s brother: the man who is consulting him should concern himself with his own art of living and remember that his brother’s anger is outside his control. In the brother’s case, Epictetus clearly allows the possibility of correction, but implies (‘bring him to me and I will speak to him’) that this can only be accomplished through conversation—a point that acknowledges the equally independent rationality of the angry brother. On the other hand, Epictetus’ interlocutor should not treat his brother’s anger as if it mattered to the goodness of his own life, but focus on keeping his own

beings and god, by which it makes assents and forms impulses. Acknowledging that these functions also belong to the *hegemonikon*, Long concludes that Epictetus uses *prohairesis* to pick out the aspects of the soul that are fully free and rational, and which are at work in our moral decision-making. Since it is plainly these aspects that are at issue in the reference to Socrates at 4.5.4, and because in that passage Epictetus is commenting on what is in our control, rather than another person’s, we can safely treat the reference to Socrates’ awareness of the *hegemonikon*’s independence as equivalent to his consciousness of the distinction between externals and what is up to us (*prohairesis*). That *hegemonikon* is equivalent to *prohairesis* in this case is made clear by Epictetus’ restatement of the maxim, with *prohairesis* in the place of *hegemonikon*, at 4.12.8., cited just above.

⁸ On the importance of the ὕλη metaphor, see below, pp. 76ff..

⁹ Cf. Bobzien, *Freedom and Determinism*, 332

ruling-principle in accord with nature—which entails, among other things, not becoming angry in return.¹⁰

On any Stoic view, this man’s brother is wrong to become angry—as are Thrasyarchus, Callicles and Polus—so that dealing properly with his anger or theirs is an instance of the proper response to wrongdoing. As Stoics do not countenance degrees of wrongness, it is appropriate that the same thoughts should inform their responses to the passions of others and to other kinds of wrongdoing, though naturally they may issue in different actions as appropriate to the differences in each case. Moreover, since one person’s anger has a special tendency to ignite another’s, resisting the spread of its fire must present a particular challenge; that Socrates himself proves so peculiarly incombustible often contributes to the drama of Plato’s dialogues. Considered more broadly, for a Stoic who believes in the kinship of all rational beings (as portions of god, 1.14.6, 2.8.10-12; cf. *Mem.* 2.318-19 on the providential provision of brothers), the angry brother could be any person who has gone so far wrong as to adopt a hostile attitude toward his fellow humans.¹¹ If, as Epictetus puts it in a discourse on social roles, this man should ‘forget that he is a brother and become an enemy instead of a brother’, it is then that his life would become worse, just as if, ‘instead of a human being, a gentle and sociable animal’, he

¹⁰ There is a probable Socratic source for this exchange in *Memorabilia* 2.3, where Xenophon describes Socrates’ efforts to reconcile Chaerecrates to his brother Chaerephon. He encourages Chaerecrates, with whom he is speaking, to take the lead by treating his brother well, telling him that even if this course of action does not improve Chaerephon’s conduct, he will only have shown himself to be a good, fraternal person. (*Mem.* 2.3.17) Though Dorion (*ad loc.*) offers reasons to regard with qualification the apparent non-instrumentalism of the Xenophontean Socrates’ recommendation, there is no reason to think that Epictetus might not have seized on a remark like this, even if the Socrates of the *Memorabilia* tends overall to recommend actions on account of their useful consequences. Dorion’s extensive commentary does not note the possible resonance of *Mem.* 2.3. in *Diss.* 1.15, but it does point out (note on *Memorabilia* 2.3.1, p. 24), that *Encheiridion* 30 displays a sequence analogous to that of *Mem.* 2.2 (to which also Epictetus alludes at 4.5.3) and 2.3, as Epictetus, like Xenophon, discusses first the question of how to deal with an unjust parent and then that of how to deal with an unjust brother.

¹¹ R. Kaster makes a similar point in introducing his translation of the *De Ira*, which was, after all, addressed to Seneca’s brother. (13) As Prof. Barney has remarked to me, the tradition of the brother’s quarrel is at least as old as Hesiod’s *Works and Days*.

should become ‘a wild beast—harmful, treacherous, and prone to biting.’ (2.10.12-14) He compares the act of forsaking the deferential affection traditionally owed to a brother and the rupture of social feeling involved in the desire to harm another person, relating the two insofar as they involve some loss (ζημία), not to the person to whom the feeling is directed, but to the person who deserts his role.¹² He answers his interlocutor’s objections by offering grounds for rejecting the return of harm for harm:

Τί οὖν; μὴ βλάψω τὸν βλάψαντα; — Πρῶτον μὲν ἰδοῦ, τί ἐστὶ βλάβη καὶ μνήσθητι ὧν ἤκουσας παρὰ τῶν φιλοσόφων. Εἰ γὰρ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἐν προαιρέσει καὶ τὸ κακὸν ὡσάυτως ἐν προαιρέσει, βλέπε μὴ τοιοῦτ’ ἐστὶν ὁ λέγεις· «τί οὖν; ἐπειδὴ ἐκεῖνος ἑαυτὸν ἔβλαπεν πρὸς ἐμέ τι ἄδικον ποιήσας, ἐγὼ ἑμαυτὸν μὴ βλάψω πρὸς ἐκεῖνον ἄδικόν τι ποιήσας; » (*Diss.* 2.10.24-26)

Well then, shall I not harm the person who did harm? — First consider what harm is, and remember what you have heard from the philosophers. For if the good is in *prohairesis* and the bad is likewise in *prohairesis*, consider whether what you are saying amounts to the following: ‘What do you mean? Now that that person has harmed himself by doing something unjust, shall I not harm myself by doing something unjust?’

Here, Epictetus’ argument recalls Socrates’ rejection of retaliation in at *Crito* 48bc but builds on it by supplying the further claim, derived ultimately from *Rep.* 335bc, that for a human being, being harmed is the very same thing as being unjust (on which more below).¹³ Accordingly, the only way to suffer harm at another’s hands is to be made worse by that other person, but as we have seen, this possibility ruled out by the independence of each person’s *hegemonikon*. Here Stoic doctrine and Socratic practice reinforce one another: by reminding himself that his own moral choice, which is beyond the control of other people, is the true locus of his own good and

¹² This passage bears connection with Epictetus’ treatment of social roles, which has been considered in several recent studies, notably Annas (‘Epictetus on Moral Perspectives’, in Theodore Scaltsas and Andrew S. Mason, eds., *The Philosophy of Epictetus* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007], 140-152), Frede (‘A Notion of a Person in Epictetus’, 153-168) and Long (*Epictetus*, 232-244)

¹³ On Socrates’ argument in the *Crito*, and the newness of the position he defends, see Gregory Vlastos, ‘Socrates’ Rejection of Retaliation,’ om *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 179-199. On the question of whether it is right to harm one’s enemies, Xenophon’s Socrates differs irreconcilably from Plato’s (see Dorion’s useful note on *Mem.* 2.6.35), but Epictetus sides with Plato in this regard.

evil, Epictetus' student can overcome his desire for retaliation and react to another person's wrongdoing as calmly as Socrates did to the anger of Polus and Callicles. It is a further consequence of this view, not only that what one suffers at another's hand cannot really be harmful, but also that the only real possibility for harm lies in one's own response to the other person's action. In redescribing his interlocutor's question as he does, Epictetus urges his students to consider more accurately what truly counts as harm, and so recognize the absurdity of retaliation. A passage from the *Encheiridion* reiterates the point succinctly, again with reference to a brother who is behaving wrongly:

ὁ ἀδελφὸς ἀδικεῖ; τήρει τοιγαροῦν τὴν τάξιν τὴν σεαυτοῦ πρὸς αὐτόν, μηδὲ σκόπει τί ἐκεῖνος ποιεῖ, ἀλλὰ τί σοι ποιήσαντι κατὰ φύσιν ἢ σὴ ἔξει προαίρεσις. σὲ γὰρ ἄλλος οὐ βλάπτει, ἂν μὴ σὺ θέλεις· τότε δὲ ἔση βεβλαμμένος, ὅταν ὑπολάβῃς βλάπτεσθαι.
(*Encheiridion* 30)

Your brother is doing wrong? In that case, watch over your relationship to him, and look not to what he does, but to what you must do to have your *prohairesis* in accordance with nature. For another person will never harm you, if you do not want them to. The moment in which you have been harmed is the very moment in which you come to believe you are being harmed.

In Epictetus' practical ethics, what matters is not the backwards-looking assessment of other people's action; fixation on this is only the cause of complaint.¹⁴ Instead, Epictetus urges his student to consider closely his own way of relating to another person: τήρει τοιγαροῦν τὴν τάξιν τὴν σεαυτοῦ πρὸς αὐτόν.¹⁵ When another person has done wrong, the only real harm to oneself comes from responding wrongly, and this begins with thinking of the action in the wrong way. If, however, one acknowledges the independence of one's own free *prohairesis*, and rightly locates one's own good and evil in that, one can avoid exactly this harm by maintaining the right relationship with the wrongdoer. This is what I have been calling a focus on moral response.

¹⁴ For Epictetus' shift of focus away from the backwards-looking question of responsibility to future-oriented practical considerations, cf. Bobzien, *Freedom and Determinism*, 333.

¹⁵ cf. also 3.10.19, which is also about brothers and the relationship of one person to another.

Epictetus' interest in responses to the wrongdoing of others is part of a more general concern with the kind of responsiveness to circumstance that he thinks the aspiring Stoic should cultivate. In the passage from *Diss.* 1.15 quoted above, Epictetus introduces an important metaphor, that of the material (ὕλη) for the *prohairesis* or for the art of life. The dominant element in this metaphor is, of course, that of craft, as Annas observed in her apt (though very brief) remarks on the subject (142-143). This comparison, which is clearly present at 1.15.2, recurs, for instance, at 1.20.30, 2.19.31 and in the citations below. The ὕλη-metaphor was certainly employed by the early Stoics, but Epictetus and, following him, Marcus Aurelius seem to have put it to a distinctive use, or at any rate to have given it greater prominence.¹⁶ For Epictetus, indifferent things are materials for *use*, and it is the use, which Epictetus identifies with the operation of the *prohairesis*, that can be good or bad.¹⁷ The agent does not have a choice in the materials on which he is to work; they are often said to 'fall' to him (1.4.20) or to be 'set' for him. Consequently, the materials themselves are indifferent, but their use is not:

αἱ ὕλαι ἀδιάφοροι, ἡ δὲ χρῆσις αὐτῶν οὐκ ἀδιάφορος (2.5.1)¹⁸

The materials are indifferent, but their use is not indifferent.

¹⁶ Plutarch attests that Chrysippus referred to τὰ κατὰ φύσιν as the 'material of virtue' (ὕλη τῆς ἀρετῆς *Comm. not.* 1069e = LS59A / *SVF* 3.491, cf. *Comm. not.* 1071b = LS64C6), and Aristo of Chios appears to have used fire's way of consuming different materials as an illustration of how the activity of the soul can be fuelled by the use of several different virtues. (LS 61B4.4) Usefully, Tsekourakis (30-38) has shown that, although our witnesses (which are, of course, very few) to the use of the ὕλη metaphor by the early Stoics mention it only in connection with τὰ κατὰ φύσιν, they must have included τὰ παρὰ φύσιν among the materials of right action as well.

¹⁷ This thematic notion of use has Socratic roots in both Plato and Xenophon. The Platonic sources are *Gorg.* 467-8, *Euthydemus* 278-82, *Meno* 87-89, as observed by Inwood (in Keimpe Algra et al. (eds.) *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005], 694), who also includes Xen. *Mem.* 4.6.8. A similar argument occurs at *Mem.* 2.3.7-10, where Socrates observes to Chaerecrates that even a brother is a source of loss to one does not know how to use him. For Epictetus in particular, an especially important source may be Socrates' discussion with Critobulus in *Oeconomicus* 1.1-15, where he establishes that the τέχνη of household management can use any possession to profit, even if the enemies a man has are counted among his possessions. (Dorion connects *Oec.* 1.8 with *Mem.* 2.3.7., noting that Socrates employs the example of a horse in both cases: one must know how to use a horse in order to benefit from having one.) The idea that the *hegemonikon* can put any material at all to good use is also prominent in Marcus Aurelius (see esp. 4.1 and discussion in the next chapter).

¹⁸ For the same point, cf. 1.15.2: 'Ὡς γὰρ τέκτονος ὕλη τὰ ξύλα, ἀνδραντοποιοῦ ὁ χαλκός, οὕτως τῆς περὶ βίον τέχνης ὕλη ὁ βίος αὐτοῦ ἐκάστου.' along with 2.6.1: '... τὸ ζῆν ἀδιάφορον, ἡ χρῆσις οὐκ ἀδιάφορος.'

Incorrect use of the materials (which Epictetus often describes as ‘being awed by’ them, as at 1.29.3 as well as 1.18.11, 2.6.3, 3.20.8; cf. similar expressions at 4.4.10) comes from forming incorrect judgements about them, resulting in a bad state of the *prohairesis*:

(1) ουσία τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ προαίρεσις ποιά, τοῦ κακοῦ προαίρεσις ποιά. (2) τί οὖν τὰ ἐκτός; ὕλαι τῇ προαιρέσει, περὶ ἧς ἀναστρεφομένη τεύξεται τοῦ ἰδίου ἀγαθοῦ ἢ κακοῦ. (3) Πῶς τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ τεύξεται; ἂν τὰς ὕλας μὴ θαυμάσῃ. Τὰ γὰρ περὶ τῶν ὕλων δόγματα ὀρθὰ μὲν ὄντα ἀγαθὴν ποιεῖ τὴν προαίρεσιν, στρεβλὰ δὲ καὶ διεστραμμένα κακὴν. (1.29.1-3)

The essence of the good is a *prohairesis* in some condition, and that of the bad is a *prohairesis* in some condition. What are externals, then? Materials for the *prohairesis*. In its relation to them it will attain its proper good or evil. How will it attain the good? If it does not admire the materials. For opinions about the materials, when they are right, make the *prohairesis* good, but when they are bent and crooked they make it bad.

Though the *prohairesis* cannot choose the materials on which it is going to work, it must put them to a correct use, and this involves a certain responsiveness to their qualities; like a skilled craftsman, the practitioner of the art of living will respond expertly to the moral features of a situation in fashioning his reaction to them.¹⁹ Epictetus describes this quality of correct use as a kind of relation to the materials (ἀναστροφή, cf. ἀναστρεφομένη in the passage just cited)²⁰:

ζητοῦμεν γὰρ ἐπὶ πάσης ὕλης πῶς ἂν εὖροι ὁ καλὸς καὶ ἀγαθὸς τὴν διέξοδον καὶ ἀναστροφήν τὴν ἐν αὐτῇ καθήκουσαν. (1.7.2.)

We are seeking to find out how, for every material, a good man may discover the method and the relation that are appropriate to it.

(5)... ἀλλ' ὥς ὀστρακίοις τὰ παιδιά παίζοντα περὶ μὲν τῆς παιδιᾶς διαφέρεται, τῶν ὀστρακίων δ' οὐ πεφρόντικεν, οὕτως δὲ καὶ οὗτος τὰς ὕλας παρ' οὐδὲν ἢ πεποιημένος, τὴν παιδιὰν δὲ περὶ αὐτὰς καὶ ἀναστροφήν ἀσπάζεται... (4.7.5)

But just as children playing with potsherds contend with each other in the playing without even giving thought to the potsherds, so too this person [*viz.* who disregards life and death] treats the materials as having no value, but embraces his relationship to them as objects of play.

¹⁹ For further development in Marcus Aurelius of the ὕλη metaphor and the mechanisms that permit this flexibility, see the discussion in the next chapter (pp. 127 ff.).

²⁰ Cf. Epictetus' use of this word to express the right relation to other people at 1.22.13 (cited below, p.99 n.46)

We should, as this last passage tells us, treat the materials just like children treat little sherds of pottery that serve as game-pieces, valuing their use rather than the things themselves. The image of game-pieces recurs in 2.5, where the metaphor of dice-playing works productively to show how awareness of the indifference of external things is compatible with, and can even promote, a proper carefulness with regard to them:

(1) Αἱ ὕλαι ἀδιάφοροι, ἡ δὲ χρῆσις αὐτῶν οὐκ ἀδιάφορος. (2) Πῶς οὖν τηρήσῃ τις ἅμα μὲν τὸ εὐσταθὲς καὶ ἀτάραχον, ἅμα δὲ τὸ ἐπιμελὲς καὶ μὴ εἰκαῖον μηδ' ἐπισεσυσμμένον; ἂν μιμεῖται τοὺς κυβεύοντας. (3) Αἱ ψῆφοι ἀδιάφοροι, οἱ κύβοι ἀδιάφοροι· πόθεν οἶδα, τί μέλλει πίπτειν; τῷ πεσόντι δ' ἐπιμελῶς καὶ τεχνικῶς χρῆσθαι, τοῦτο ἤδη ἐμὸν ἔργον ἐστίν. (4) Οὕτως τοίνυν τὸ μὲν προηγούμενον καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ βίου ἔργον ἐκείνο· διέλε τὰ πράγματα καὶ διάστησον καὶ εἰπὲ « τὰ ἔξω οὐκ ἐπ' ἐμοί· προαίρεσις ἐπ' ἐμοί. (5) Ποῦ ζητήσω τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ κακόν; ἔσω ἐν τοῖς ἐμοῖς ». Ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἀλλοτρίοις μηδέποτε μὴτ' ἀγαθὸν ὀνομάσῃς μήτε κακὸν μὴτ' ὠφέλειαν μήτε βλάβην μὴτ' ἄλλο τι τῶν τοιούτων. (6) — Τί οὖν; ἀμελῶς τούτοις χρηστέον; — οὐδαμῶς. Τοῦτο γὰρ πάλιν τῇ προαίρεσει κακὸν ἐστὶ καὶ παρὰ φύσιν. (7) Ἀλλ' ἅμα μὲν ἐπιμελῶς, ὅτι ἡ χρῆσις οὐκ ἀδιάφορον, ἅμα δ' εὐσταθῶς καὶ ἀταράχως, ὅτι ἡ ὕλη οὐ διαφέρουσα. ὅπου γὰρ τὸ διαφέρον, ἐκεῖ οὔτε κωλύσαι μέ τις δύναται οὔτ' ἀναγκάσαι. (8) ὅπου κωλυτὸς καὶ ἀναγκαστός εἰμι, ἐκείνων ἡ μὲν τεῦξις οὐκ ἐπ' ἐμοὶ οὐδ' ἀγαθὸν ἢ κακόν, ἡ χρῆσις δ' ἢ κακὸν ἢ ἀγαθόν, ἀλλ' ἐπ' ἐμοί. (2.5.1-8)

The materials are indifferent, but the use of them is not indifferent. How, then, can a person simultaneously keep watch over good balance and freedom from disturbance, as well as proper diligence, as opposed to haphazard nonchalance? If he does as dice-players do. The throws are indifferent, the dice are indifferent—how do I know how they'll fall?—but to play the die as it fell with care and skill, now *this* is my job. Likewise, then, the guiding task of life is the following: divide matters and set them apart and say, 'What is external is not up to me, but *prohairesis* is up to me. Where shall I look for good and bad? Inside, among the things that are mine. Among the things are others', never call anything either good or evil, or benefit or harm, or anything of the kind. — What do you mean? Am I to use these things carelessly? — In no way. For again, that is a bad thing for the *prohairesis* and contrary to nature. Rather, you must use them carefully, for the use of them is not indifferent, but at the same time in a way that is well balanced and free from disturbance. For where there is a difference, no one can hinder or compel me. But where I am subject to hindrance and compulsion, the getting of what is not up to me is neither good nor bad, whereas the use is bad or good, but it is up to me.

By comparing the relevant notion of use to the use one makes of the game-pieces when they fall, Epictetus highlights the essentially reactive character of a person's relationship to the materials he uses. A good dice player is someone who makes the best use of the dice as they have fallen,

rather than someone who has made a lucky throw.²¹ When he fulfills his task, his activity consists in reacting correctly to events outside his control; acting in imitation of this dice player will help the moral agent to remain undisturbed by external events.

(19) πρῶτον οὖν τὸ ἡγεμονικόν σε δεῖ τὸ σαυτοῦ καθαρὸν ποιῆσαι καὶ τὴν ἔνστασιν ταύτην· (20) « νῦν ἐμοὶ ὕλη ἐστὶν ἢ ἐμὴ διάνοια, ὥς τῷ τέκτονι τὰ ξύλα, ὥς τῷ σκυτεῖ τὰ δέρματα· ἔργον δ' ὀρθὴ χρῆσις τῶν φαντασίων. ... » (3.22.19-20)

First, you must make your commanding-faculty clean and clear, and take up the following beginning: 'Now my mind is material to me, just as lumber is to the carpenter or leather to the cobbler. My job is the correct use of impressions...'

(1) ὕλη τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ ἀγαθοῦ τὸ ἴδιον ἡγεμονικόν, τὸ σῶμα δ' ἱατροῦ καὶ ἀλείπτου, ὁ ἀγρὸς γεωργοῦ ὕλη· ἔργον δὲ καλοῦ καὶ ἀγαθοῦ τὸ χρῆσθαι ταῖς φαντασίαις κατὰ φύσιν. (2) Πέφυκεν δὲ πᾶσα ψυχὴ ὥσπερ τῷ ἀληθεῖ ἐπινεύειν, πρὸς τὸ ψεῦδος ἀνανεύειν, πρὸς δὲ τὸ ἄδηλον ἐπέχειν, οὕτως πρὸς μὲν τὸ ἀγαθὸν ὀρεκτικῶς κινεῖσθαι, πρὸς δὲ τὸ κακὸν ἐκκλιτικῶς, πρὸς δὲ τὸ μήτε κακὸν μήτ' ἀγαθὸν οὐδετέρως. (3.3.1-3)

The material of the honourable and good man is his own commanding-faculty, while the body is the material of the doctor and of the trainer, and a field is that of the farmer. Just as it is the nature of every soul to assent to what is true, dissent from what is false, and suspend judgement on what is uncertain, it is likewise its nature to be moved with desire for what is good, with aversion to what is bad, and to what is neither good nor bad with neither.

This point is crucial because human beings are bound to hate what impedes them (παῖς ἄνθρωπος μισεῖ τὸ ἐμποδίζον, 3.4.6). This takes on a special relevance in the interpersonal context of, for example, 1.15, since realizing the independence of the προαίρεσις makes it free from hindrance will do away with the hatred that characterizes the angry response to wrongdoing (τὸ μισητικόν, 1.18.9).

The materials on which the art of living operates include our impressions regarding the actions of other people, which naturally fall outside the control of one's own προαίρεσις.²² As

²¹ A pertinent contemporary restatement of this analogy could make the comparison to any game where a player exercises skill in playing cards that are distributed by chance; the paradigm case is probably poker, at least in North America. The same idea is sometimes conveyed by our expression: 'You have to play the hand you're dealt.'

²² 1.15, discussed above, makes this clear by treating one brother's anger as material for another brother's art of living.

we look beyond the craft analogy by which Epictetus illustrates the mind's use of impressions to the psychological mechanism by which the soul carries out this operation, two passages (one from Epictetus and one from Marcus Aurelius) help to flesh out Epictetus' claim at 1.29.3 that correct beliefs about the materials make the *prohairesis* correct—insofar, we may take it, as this understanding is a necessary condition of their correct use by the *prohairesis*—as well as shedding light on the application of this doctrine in interpersonal relationships where it helps to guarantee freedom from anger in the face of others' misdeeds. The first of these texts is a short discourse (3.8) on the training needed to handle our impressions. Epictetus begins by comparing this to the kind of exercise needed to deal with sophistical questioning, which invites comparison with Socratic practice.²³ He then proposes that we 'answer' our impressions by determining what is good or bad according to whether it depends on the *prohairesis*:

Ὡς πρὸς τὰ ἐρωτήματα τὰ σοφιστικὰ γυμναζόμεθα, οὕτως καὶ πρὸς τὰς φαντασίας καθ' ἡμέραν ἔδει γυμνάζεσθαι· προτείνουσι γὰρ ἡμῖν καὶ αὗται ἐρωτήματα. — ὁ υἱὸς ἀπέθανε τοῦ δεῖνος. — ἀποκρίναι· ἀπροαίρετον, οὐ κακόν. — ἀποκληρονόμον ἀπέλιπεν. τί σοι δοκεῖ; — ἀπροαίρετον, οὐ κακόν. — Καῖσαρ αὐτὸν κατέκρινεν. — ἀπροαίρετον, οὐ κακόν. — ἐλυπήθη ἐπὶ τούτοις. — προαιρέτικον, κακόν. — γενναίως ὑπέμεινεν. — προαιρέτικον, ἀγαθόν. κὰν οὕτως ἐθιζώμεθα, προκόψομεν· οὐδέποτε γὰρ ἄλλῃ συγκαταθησόμεθα ἢ οὗ φαντασία καταληπτικὴ γίνεται. (3.8.1-4)

Just as we train to deal with sophistical interrogations, so too we should also be training daily to deal with appearances, for they present us with interrogations as well. — So-and-so's son has died. — Reply: it is not a matter for the *prohairesis*, and not a bad thing. — He has been left without an heir. What do you think of that? — It is not a matter for the *prohairesis*, and not a bad thing. — Caesar has condemned him. — It is not a matter for the *prohairesis*, and not a bad thing. — He was distressed by it all. — That is a matter for the *prohairesis*, and a bad thing. — He bore up bravely under it. — That is a matter for the *prohairesis*, and a good thing. And if we form our habits in this way, we will make progress. For we will never assent to anything unless we have a reliably grasped impression of it.

Whether an event is προαιρέτικόν or ἀπροαίρετον is perspective-dependent: when a man is condemned by Caesar, it is only from the perspective of the condemned that this is not a matter

²³ So too at 3.12.14, Epictetus compares the discipline of impressions to the famous Socratic injunction not to live an unexamined life.

of choice, since for Caesar the decision to condemn him falls firmly within the domain of the *prohairesis*—a fact that held particular importance for Seneca and especially for Marcus. From each person’s own perspective, it is vital to distinguish between the bare fact that an impression conveys and the value that depends on whether an event was one’s own action or not. The same discourse continues:

— ὁ υἱὸς ἀπέθανε. — τί ἐγένετο; ὁ υἱὸς ἀπέθανεν. — ἄλλο οὐδέν; — οὐδέν. — τὸ πλοῖον ἀπώλετο. — τί ἐγένετο; τὸ πλοῖον ἀπώλετο. — εἰς φυλακὴν ἀπήχθη. — τί γέγονεν; εἰς φυλακὴν ἀπήχθη. τὸ δ’ ὅτι κακῶς πέπραχεν ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἕκαστος προστίθουσιν. (3.8.5-6)

— His son died. — What happened? His son died. — Nothing else? — Nothing. — The ship was lost. — What happened? The ship was lost. — He was led off to prison — What has happened? He was led off to prison. That he has fared badly is something that each person adds on his own.

In describing the belief that one has fared badly as something one ‘adds’ to an impression, Epictetus describes the first step in the impression’s misuse. Marcus Aurelius, always a close reader of Epictetus, appears to echo this passage and others like it (such as, for instance, 3.3.5-10) in a passage that applies the same technique:

μηδὲν πλέον αὐτῷ λέγε, ὃν αἱ προηγούμεναι φαντασίαι ἀναγγέλλουσιν. ἡγγεῖται, ὅτι ὁ δεῖνά σε κακῶς λέγει. ἡγγεῖται τοῦτο· τὸ ὅτι βέβλασαι, οὐκ ἡγγεῖται. βλέπω, ὅτι νοσεῖ τὸ παιδίον. βλέπω· ὅτι δὲ κινδυνεύει, οὐ βλέπω. οὕτως οὖν μένε αἰεὶ ἐπὶ τῶν πρώτων φαντασιῶν, καὶ μηδὲν αὐτὸς ἔνδοθεν ἐπίλεγε καὶ οὐδὲν σοι γίνεται· μᾶλλον δὲ ἐπίλεγε ὡς γνωρίζων ἕκαστα τῶν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ συμβαινόντων. (MA 8.49)²⁴

Do not say anything more to yourself than what the initial appearances report. It is reported that so-and-so speaks ill of you. This is the report. That you have been harmed is not the report. I see that my child is sick. This is what I see. That the child is in danger I do not see. In this way, then, always keep to the first appearances, and do not add to them from within yourself, and nothing happens to you. Rather, add to them that you are aware that each of these is among the things that happen in the world.

A correct response depends on not contributing a false belief that goes beyond what is really conveyed by the impression to which one must react, since once this is done the wrong response

²⁴ cf. MA 4.7 Ἄρον τὴν ὑπόληψιν, ἥρται τὸ βέβλαμμαι. Ἄρον τὸ βέβλαμμαι, ἥρται ἡ βλάβη.

is sure to follow. One must not complain, as Epictetus imagines his interlocutor as doing, that Zeus chose to fashion the world as it is—namely, in the cases that interest us here, as a world containing wrongdoers—but rather, as the Marcus passage underlines, adopt a holistic point of view, from which what seemed to be an adverse event appears as simply a part of the cosmic order. This can be done without excusing the wrongdoer: when something that is a matter of choice is done badly, Epictetus calls it bad, as we have seen. And so, in the case Marcus is describing in an Epictetan fashion, the impression ‘so-and-so has spoken badly of me’, may very well call for a response, but responding instead to the false impressions ‘I have been harmed’, will result in a failure of fit between the response and the reality of the situation.

From what we have seen so far, it is clear that the framework that supports Epictetus’ advice for dealing with another person’s anger must also support his prescribed response to wrongdoing of any kind. The case of another’s anger is instructive, however, both because it is the very response that Epictetus is trying to discredit and because it helps us further to understand Epictetus’ use of the Platonic Socrates. In the plots of Plato’s dialogues, anger occurs primarily as a dialectical failing: the likes of Polus, Callicles and Thrasymachus become angry when their views are challenged or discredited. In the *Apology* (31a5, 34c8-d1), Socrates sees anger like this as having led to the charges against him (an instance of wrongdoing that figures repeatedly in Epictetus’ *Discourses*), while in the *Gorgias* and in *Republic I* it threatens to derail a conversation about the most important things (*Gorg.* 505d-506c, cf. 457c-d; *Resp.* 336e, 344b). In all these cases, the angry interlocutors are reacting to what they take to be Socrates’ wrong action, which is merely his attempt to correct their mistakes; from Socrates’ perspective, they are the ones who do wrong by getting angry with him when trying to change

his mind. He, however, reacts differently to their wrongness from how they react to what they perceive as his. In contrast to their angry rebukes and bids at retaliation, his reaction is usually marked by a quiet confidence that nothing but argument can change his mind, and it is exactly here that we see the interpretive force of Epictetus' observation that, as Socrates knows, no person controls another's *hegemonikon*.

Though the surviving records of Epictetus' teaching do not include his more formal lessons, there is little doubt that his classes involved the reading and interpretation of important works in what was, by his time, the history of philosophy.²⁵ Along with the works of Chrysippus and other early Stoics, the dialogues of Plato would have had a prominent place in his curriculum, and his own deep reading of these sources has certainly informed his portrayal of Socrates. Far from being an arbitrary appropriation of a prestigious historical figure, Epictetus' treatment of Socrates reflects an interpretation that is worth taking seriously in its own right, and which would likely have proven irresistible to a Stoic intent on engaging deeply with Socratic literature. The full extent of Epictetus' engagement with Plato is more than can be measured in this treatment, but it is still possible to call attention to several passages that support Epictetus' account of Socrates' characteristic calm quite precisely. Perhaps most importantly of all, Socrates' conversations with Polus and Callicles in the *Gorgias* speak vividly of the contrast between philosophy's promise of teaching and correction and the more violent aspirations of rhetoric, which seeks to alter convictions as though by force.²⁶ In an exchange that grimly

²⁵ 1.10.8-9, where Epictetus describes his preparation for the day's readings, has frequently been cited as evidence for Epictetus' use of textual commentary in his classes.

²⁶ Cf. Long on this passage, who speaks of 'Polus' attempts to defend the value of sheer rhetorical power'. (72) The comparison of the power of persuasive speech to overpowering physical violence can be traced to the historical Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen*, where Gorgias speaks of the power of speech to compel assent. (8-14, esp. 12) As Prof. Inwood has observed to me, this defence of Helen comes at the price of denying her agency; this is exactly what the Stoic doctrine of uncompelled assent avoids, and what their account of the proper response to wrongdoing refuses to allow. Of Gorgias' four lines of defence, the possibility that Helen was carried off by force (7) is the only

foreshadows Socrates' trial, Polus appeals to Athenian popular opinion to persuade Socrates that anyone would sooner do wrong than suffer it. Socrates grants that many of the city's most famous citizens would in fact make that choice, but protests that their false testimony is worthless:

ἀλλ' ἐγὼ σοι εἷς ὢν οὐκ ὁμολογῶ· οὐ γάρ με σὺ ἀναγκάζεις, ἀλλὰ ψευδομάρτυρας πολλοὺς κατ' ἐμοῦ παρασχόμενος ἐπιχειρεῖς ἐκβάλλειν με ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας καὶ τοῦ ἀληθοῦς. (*Gorgias* 472b3-6)

But I, being just one person, do not agree with you, for you do not force me to do so. No, you merely present a horde of false witnesses against me, and so endeavour to deprive me of what is mine, the truth.

No matter who speaks against Socrates, they cannot alter his convictions, or make him think that those who do wrong are better off than their victims. What Polus is attempting to do by the mere force of others' opinions can only be accomplished, for Socrates, by legitimate forms of persuasion in the course of a conversation:

ἐγὼ γὰρ ὢν ἅν λέγω ἓνα μὲν παρασχέσθαι μάρτυρα ἐπίσταμαι, αὐτὸν πρὸς ὃν ἂν μοι ὁ λόγος ᾗ, τοὺς δὲ πολλοὺς ἐὼ χαίρειν, καὶ ἓνα μὲν ἐπισηφίζειν ἐπίσταμαι, τοῖς δὲ πολλοῖς οὐδὲ διαλέγομαι. ὅρα οὖν εἰ ἐθελήσεις ἐν τῷ μέρει διδόναι ἔλεγχον ἀποκρινόμενος τὰ ἐρωτώμενα. (474a5-b2)

For I know how to present just one witness for what I'm saying, the very person with whom I'm speaking, saying goodbye to the crowd. And I know how to take just one person's vote, without so much as addressing the crowd. So consider whether you are willing to give me a chance to refute you in turn by answering my questions.

In a conversation, each person may choose whether to assent to a given claim; Socrates, amidst a crowd of forceful speakers and hostile witnesses, knows that even then his agreement cannot be compelled. Here we can see the direction of Epictetus' insight, as what accounts for Socrates' calm assurance in the face of Polus' brash opposition is his confidence that mere rhetorical violence cannot force his assent to a false belief; this thought is just what Epictetus expresses

plea that Stoics would countenance as exculpatory, since it is fully compatible with her not having assented to going to Troy with Paris. That the workings of fate provide no excuse for wrong action, as Gorgias claims in Helen's case (6), sits at the core of Stoic compatibilism; that overpowering passion is likewise no excuse (15-19) is equally clear on Stoic principles (see the discussion of Medea below).

when he says that no person can control another's *hegemonikon*. Socrates' response to Polus would be incoherent if he tried by some other forceful means to make Polus agree with him, and so for just the same reason as he remains unmoved by Polus' blustering speeches, he begins his bid to correct Polus by asking him to agree to be questioned. This is because Socrates knows that he cannot force Polus' assent any more than Polus can force his.²⁷

The interpersonal perspective entailed by the recognition that no one controls another's *hegemonikon*, Socratic as it is, allows for the right reaction not only to another person's anger, but also to wrongs of other perhaps more serious kinds, and here too Epictetus' account of moral response is strongly influenced by his reading of Plato's Socrates.²⁸ On this point, Epictetus' main text is the *Apology*, where Socrates responds to the efforts of Anytus and Meletus to secure his unjust execution. Through his Stoic interpretation of several key Socratic claims, Epictetus is able to develop his own account of moral response, which teaches how to suffer injustice without feeling anger (that is, without reacting wrongly to the wrong actions of others), how to regard wrongdoers as erring human beings (and so as other rational agents in need of correction), and how to address their mistakes correctly (namely, through teaching and refutation).

Among the Stoic doctrines on which Epictetus insists most persistently is the claim that what is not up to us cannot do us good or ill. It corresponds to the first of the three stages of moral education that Epictetus outlines at 3.2 and to which he refers elsewhere.²⁹ Mastery of this

²⁷ Epictetus quotes these lines in a close paraphrase at 2.12.5. at 2.26.6. Significantly, the truth that Socrates is trying to get Polus to acknowledge is that it is worse to commit injustice than to suffer it (474b2-5). This conviction that the greatest good and evil lies not in what one suffers but in what one does is naturally congenial to Epictetus' use of the Socratic paradigm.

²⁸ Of course, speaking of degrees of wrongness would require a Stoic to make allowances for a common way of putting things, as Marcus does at 2.10.

²⁹ Commentators appear to agree that this well-known threefold division is original with Epictetus; there is some controversy over how it should be understood in relation to the threefold division of philosophy into ethics, physics

topic is what allows the philosopher to experience any kind of mistreatment without suffering, since his desires and aversions are not directed toward what is not up to him; this, Epictetus tells us, is crucial to the elimination of the passions (*Diss.* 3.2.1-3). Epictetus found support for this Stoic view in Plato's *Apology*, where Socrates, warning the jury that they face a greater danger than he does, declares that the prosecutors Anytus and Meletus, even if they kill, banish or disenfranchise him, still cannot harm him:

Εὖ γὰρ ἴστε, ἐάν με ἀποκτείνητε τοιοῦτον ὄντα οἷον ἐγὼ λέγω, οὐκ ἐμὲ μείζω βλάψετε ἢ ὑμᾶς αὐτοὺς· ἐμὲ μὲν γὰρ οὐδὲν ἂν βλάψειεν οὔτε Μέλητος οὔτε Ἄνυτος· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἂν δύναίτο· οὐ γὰρ οἶμαι θεμιτὸν εἶναι ἀμείνονι ἀνδρὶ ὑπὸ χείρονος βλάπτεσθαι. ἀποκτείνειε μεντὰν ἴσως ἢ ἐξελάσειεν ἢ ἀτιμώσειεν· ἀλλὰ ταῦτα οὗτος μὲν ἴσως οἶεται καὶ ἄλλος τίς που μεγάλα κακά, ἐγὼ δ' οὐκ οἶμαι, ἀλλὰ πολὺ μᾶλλον ποιεῖν ἢ οὗτος νυνὶ ποιεῖ, ἄνδρα ἀδίκως ἐπιχειρεῖν ἀποκτεινύναι. (*Apology* 30c7-d6)

For you know well that if you kill me, and I am the kind of man I say I am, you will do me no more harm than you do yourselves: for Meletus and Anytus would not harm me at all, nor could they: for I believe it is not sanctioned that a better man should be harmed by a worse. Kill me they might indeed, or exile or dishonour me; but while they and others may, I suppose, think these are great evils, I do not think so. Rather, I think it is much worse to do what he is doing now, to try to kill a man unjustly.

For Socrates, it is only if death, banishment and disenfranchisement really were bad that it would count as harm to inflict them.³⁰ Here we can tell that Socrates' belief that nothing can harm a good man is not only a belief in divine or daemonic protection (as one reading of 41c8-d1, cited below, might suggest), but also—and perhaps primarily—a claim about what counts as good and bad. By denying the badness even of what people generally take to be the most serious suffering that one person can inflict upon another, Socrates dramatically reduces the resources of anyone who might hope to harm him. This creates for Socrates a very strong sort of

and dialectic that is traditional in the Stoa. Long (*Epictetus*, 117, 125) endorses the treatment of Pierre Hadot, which is the most extensive (*The Inner Citadel* [tr. Micahel Chase, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998] 98-115), which sees the first discipline as corresponding to physics, the second to ethics and the third to dialectic.

³⁰ As this makes clear, harm just is the infliction of something bad; cf. DL VII.102, where the Stoics are said to classify as indifferents what 'neither benefits nor harms'.

independence from others' wrongdoing and insulates him, as it were, from the effects of their injustice. The result of this is that as far as his own good is concerned, the wrongdoing of others just does not matter to Socrates, so that there is simply no need for his response to be motivated by a reaction to the harm they might wrongly be thought to cause. It is no wonder that, as Gregory Vlastos notes, 'This is Epictetus' favourite Socratic text. He cites it repeatedly (always in the same pungent paraphrase: "Anytus and Meletus can kill me but cannot harm me"): *Diss.* 1.29.17; [3].2.15; 2.23.21; *Ench.* 53.'³¹

Given this Socratic rejection of the possibility of interpersonal harm, it cannot be reasonable to respond to another's wrongdoing *as harm to oneself*, or for that matter as harm to a third party, and this rules out anger as a rational response. It can be reasonable, however, to respond to wrongdoing *as harm to the wrongdoer*, which is to respond to it *as vice*. A passage from the *Apology* shows Socrates explicitly rejecting anger toward his accusers and the jurors who sided with them, even when, in the same breath, he condemns the wrongness of their actions:

Ἀλλὰ καὶ ὑμᾶς χρή, ὧ ἄνδρες δικασταί, εὐέλπιδας εἶναι πρὸς τὸν θάνατον, καὶ ἔν τι τοῦτο διανοεῖσθαι ἀληθές, ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἀνδρὶ ἀγαθῷ κακὸν οὐδὲν οὔτε ζῶντι οὔτε τελευτήσαντι, οὐδὲ ἀμελεῖται ὑπὸ θεῶν τὰ τούτου πράγματα· οὐδὲ τὰ ἐμὰ νῦν ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου γέγονεν, ἀλλὰ μοι δῆλόν ἐστι τοῦτο, ὅτι ἤδη τεθνάναι καὶ ἀπηλλάχθαι πραγμάτων βέλτιον ἦν μοι. διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἐμὲ οὐδαμοῦ ἀπέτρεψεν τὸ σημεῖον, καὶ ἔγωγε τοῖς καταψηφισαμένοις μου καὶ τοῖς κατηγοροῖς οὐ πᾶν χαλεπαίνω. καίτοι οὐ

³¹ 'Happiness and Virtue in Socrates' Moral Theory' in *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher*, 219n. Vlastos' article is an attempt to distinguish Socrates' position on the sufficiency of virtue for happiness from that of the Stoics. Acknowledging that several texts seem to identify virtue and happiness just as strictly as Stoics do (the view he calls the 'Identity Thesis'), he finds others to show that Socrates counts other goods as minimally incremental to happiness as long as they are conjoined with virtue (the view he calls the 'Sufficiency Thesis'). Vlastos' subject is Socrates, but his notes 37, 65, 72, 78, 80, 89, 84 and 96 sustain an engagement with Stoicism. Vlastos refers to *Ap.* 305cd, 41cd, *Rep.* I. 334c (discussed in this chapter), along with *Cr.* 48b, *Ap.* 29e-30b, *Gorg.* 470e and 507bc when he remarks: 'Any of these texts, read without the correction for which I have argued above, would amply suffice to make the Stoics believe that their view of the "all-sufficiency of virtue"... was pukka Socratic.' (223n.81) The 'correction' in question involves understanding Socrates' claim that his accusers cannot harm him as meaning only that they cannot *greatly* harm him (219-224); Vlastos argues subtly in its favour, but there is room for doubt as to whether his construal is warranted, and in any case, there is no reason (nor does Vlastos suggest there is) to expect that a Stoic reader would have entertained or accepted it.

ταύτη τῇ διανοίᾳ κατεψηφίζοντό μου καὶ κατηγοροῦν, ἀλλ' οἰόμενοι βλάπτειν· τοῦτο αὐτοῖς ἄξιον μέμφεσθαι. (*Apology* 41c8-e1)

But you too, gentlemen of the jury, must also be of good hope in the face of death, and firmly keep in mind this single truth: to a man who is good there comes no evil, either while he lives or when he dies; his affairs, moreover, are not neglected by the gods. Nor did mine come about all on their own; no, it is clear to me that to die—and to be released from my affairs—has by now become the better thing for me; this is also why my sign did not turn me back at all. And for my part, I am not angry in the least with those who voted to condemn me, or with my accusers. But it was not with this in mind that they voted to condemn me or accused me, but thinking that they would harm me. For this they are to blame.

It is very likely that Epictetus would have read this passage to mean that Socrates' reason for not becoming angry is his confidence that he has not been harmed—and not *only* that the gods had decided it was time for him to die.³² It does not follow from this, or from the jury's ignorance in convicting and sentencing Socrates, that their actions are anything short of fully culpable; Socrates wants the jury to know that his own dispassionate response is not a reflection of the hostile jurors' non-responsibility.³³ From their own limited view of Socrates' case, the jurors who voted to condemn him did wrong insofar as they wished to harm Socrates and believed they could; even though Socrates, with his refined view of interpersonal action, is persuaded that

³² This is not to deny that Epictetus sets great store by the principle nothing that the gods bring about can be bad or harmful. In adapting Plato's account of Socrates' reaction to his condemnation, Epictetus thoroughly blends his hero's consent to god's will with his confidence that his enemies cannot harm him. Here Epictetus responds to an interlocutor upset at Socrates' imprisonment and execution: (17) Ταῦτά σοι φαίνεται θαυμαστά, ταῦτα ἄδικα, ἐπὶ τούτοις ἐγκαλεῖς τῷ θεῷ; οὐδὲν εἶχε Σωκράτης ἀντὶ τούτων; (18) ποῦ ἦν ἡ οὐσία αὐτῷ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ; τί τι προσσχῶμεν; σοὶ ἢ αὐτῷ; καὶ τί λέγει ἐκεῖνος; « ἐμὲ δ' Ἄνυτος καὶ Μέλητος ἀποκοτεῖναι μὲν δύναται, βλάψαι δ' οὐ. » καὶ πάλιν « εἰ ταύτη τῷ θεῷ φίλον, ταύτη γινέσθω. » (Diss. 1.29.16-18) These things [*viz.*, the jailing and poisoning of Socrates' paltry body] seem astonishing to you, these things seem unjust? On their account you accuse the gods? Did Socrates have nothing in exchange for them? Where was the essence of the good for him? Whom shall we ask, you or him? And what does he say? "Anytus and Meletus can kill me, but they cannot harm me," as well as, "If this is what god desires, let it happen." For Epictetus, god has indeed made a place for wicked people in the world (1.12.16), but by providing that only what is in each person's control can do him or her good or ill (1.13.33-34), he has also ensured that these people, however wicked they may be, cannot do harm to others.

³³ Socrates does not apply his paradox to the accusers or the hostile jurors explicitly, but that they do wrong unwillingly appears to follow from premisses stated within the *Apology*. When Socrates argues that his own wrongdoing, if he were guilty, could only have been unwilling, it is on the grounds that in corrupting his associates he would have caused himself harm; because no one is willingly harmed, he cannot have corrupted them willingly (25d1-e5). He also makes it clear that Anytus, Meletus and the jurors will harm themselves in convicting him (30c9-d6), and so it follows from the same premisses that the injustice they commit in condemning him is not willingly done.

their wrongdoing has no effect on him, he still believes they are to blame for having treated another person with such hostility.

Epictetus' understanding of harm and his rejection of anger are also jointly supported by his reading of *Republic* 1, where Socrates argues with Polemarchus against the idea that one ought to do harm to unjust people:

Ἔστιν ἄρα, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, δικαίου ἀνδρὸς βλάπτειν καὶ ὄντιν' οὖν ἀνθρώπων; — Καὶ πάνυ γε, ἔφη· τοὺς γε πονηροὺς τε καὶ ἐχθροὺς δεῖ βλάπτειν. — Βλαπτόμενοι δ' ἵπποι βελτίους ἢ χείρους γίνονται; — Χείρους. — Ἄρα εἰς τὴν τῶν κυνῶν ἀρετὴν, ἢ εἰς τὴν τῶν ἵππων; — Εἰς τὴν τῶν ἵππων. — Ἄρ' οὖν καὶ κύνες βλαπτόμενοι χείρους γίνονται εἰς τὴν τῶν κύνων ἀρετὴν ἀλλ' οὐκ εἰς τὴν τῶν ἵππων ἀρετὴν; — Ἀνάγκη. — Ἀνθρώπους δέ, ὧς ἐταῖρε, μὴ οὕτω φῶμεν, βλαπτομένους εἰς τὴν ἀνθρωπείαν ἀρετὴν χείρους γίνεσθαι; — Πάνυ μὲν οὖν. — Ἀλλ' ἡ δικαιοσύνη οὐκ ἀνθρωπεία ἀρετή; — Καὶ τοῦτ' ἀνάγκη. — Καὶ τοὺς βλαπτομένους ἄρα, ὧς φίλε, τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀνάγκη ἀδικωτέρους γίνεσθαι. (335b2-c7)

Does it belong, then, to a just man to harm anyone at all? — Absolutely. He must in any case harm the wicked, who are his enemies. — When horses are harmed, do they become better or worse? — Worse. — In canine or in equine excellence? — Equine. — So when dogs are harmed they become worse in canine excellence, not in equine excellence? — Necessarily. — Then shall we not say, my friend, that when human beings are harmed they become worse in human excellence? — Of course. — But isn't justice human excellence? — Yes, that is necessary too. — Then it is also necessary for human beings who are harmed to become more unjust.

From this Socrates will draw the conclusion that the good person will not harm anyone—even the wicked—since in order for real harm to be done, one person must make another person more unjust.³⁴ On this view, it may even be impossible to return harm for harm—as it certainly was on the Stoic view—and even if it is possible to harm someone by making him worse, it is obviously against the interests of justice. This argument does not depend, as might be supposed, on an equivocation on the sense of harm, but it does involve understanding harm in a particular way, as always involving damage to its object. Here again, for Epictetus it is precisely Socrates'

³⁴ Epictetus puts this argument to different use in 3.1.6-9, where he again follows Socrates in arguing from the virtue of a horse and the virtue of a dog to establish that the virtue of a human being is justice (and that this, rather than personal adornment, is what makes a person beautiful).

knowledge that no one controls another's mind that supports his confidence that he cannot be harmed. For in order to harm him, Anytus and Meletus would have to force him to assent to a falsehood, but this, he knows, they cannot do.³⁵ (cf. 3.22.42, where Epictetus denies that anyone can force someone else to assent to a falsehood.) This must be why Epictetus pairs Socrates' declaration that his accusers cannot harm him with a statement of his commitment to ignore everything but rational argument as the lessons that a good reader will take from Socratic works. (3.23.21) Epictetus reminds his students to take confidence, like Socrates, in the fact that no accuser, however powerful, can cause a person to be guilty just by judging her so:

(50) Ἀλλ' ἀπεφίητο ὁ ἔχων τὴν ἐξουσίαν· « κρίνω σε ἀσεβῆ καὶ ἀνόσιον εἶναι. » Τί σοι γέγονεν; — Ἐκρίθην ἀσεβῆς καὶ ἀνόσιον εἶναι. (51) — Ἄλλο οὐδέν; — Οὐδέν. — Εἰ δὲ περὶ συνημμένου τινὸς ἐπικεκρίκει καὶ ἐδεδώκει ἀπόφασιν « τὸ εἰ ἡμέρα ἐστίν, φῶς ἐστὶν κρίνω ψεῦδος εἶναι », τί ἐγγέγονει τῷ συνημμένῳ; τίς ἐνθάδε κρίνεται, τίς κατακέκριται; τὸ συνημμένον ἢ ὁ ἐξαπατηθεὶς περὶ αὐτοῦ; (1.29.50-51)

But the one in authority has declared: 'I judge you impious and unholy.' What has happened to you? — I have been judged impious and unholy. — Nothing else? — Nothing else. — If he had made a judgement concerning some implication and had issued the decree, 'The claim that if it is day is it light, I judge to be false,' what would have happened to the implication? Who is judged in that case, who has been condemned? The implication, or the person who has made a mistake about it?

The unjust accuser cannot, by means of his own judgement or his action, make a just person into a wrongdoer (which would be the only way of harming him), but instead becomes a wrongdoer

³⁵ In the *Meno*, Anytus departs abruptly from a conversation in which he has become angry with Socrates for questioning the ability of leading Athenians to educate their own children in virtue. Tellingly, his parting threat is veiled in the claim that it is particularly easy for one to do good or ill to another in Athens (or, adopting Buttmann's emendation, that to do them ill is even easier): ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν ἂν σοι συμβουλευσάμην, εἰ ἐθέλεις ἐμοὶ πείθεσθαι, εὐλαβεῖσθαι· ὥς ἴσως μὲν καὶ ἐν ἄλλῃ πόλει ῥᾷδιόν (MSS; ῥᾷόν Buttman) ἐστὶν κακῶς ποιεῖν ἀνθρώπους ἢ εὖ, ἐν τῇδε δὲ καὶ πάνυ. (94e4-6) Socrates, speaking to Meno, ascribes Anytus' anger to the fact that he has taken Socrates to speak ill (κακηγορεῖν) of a group of men in which he includes himself, and then goes on to say that once Anytus realizes what sort of thing it really is to speak badly, his anger will stop: ἄλλ' οὗτος μὲν ἂν ποτε γινῶ οἷόν ἐστιν τὸ κακῶς λέγειν, παύσεται χαλεπαίνων, νῦν δὲ ἄγνοεῖ. (95a4-6) Two possible (and compatible) interpretations of Socrates' remark would accord with what he says in the *Apology* and support views adopted by the Stoics: either Socrates means that when Anytus realizes what it is to speak ill of another (that is, not the sort of thing that can do him harm), he will stop being angry because he realizes he and his friends have not been harmed, or that when he realizes what it really means to speak badly (that is, to speak untruly), he will stop being angry because he realizes that this, which depends on him, rather than criticism that depends on others, is what one really should avoid.

by virtue of his own false judgement. (cf. 2.6.28-29) The harm in such a case is not to the victim, but to the wrongdoer himself.

So far we have considered how the Socratic paradigm supports Epictetus' central claim that the wrongdoing of one person cannot be bad or harmful to another, and particularly how Epictetus portrays Socrates as a positive example of someone who avoids anger by maintaining a clear view of how others' actions relate to him. We turn now to the substantive role this model plays in providing a constructive way of interacting with the wrongdoer, which does justice to the wrongness of his or her action and shows no lack of moral vigour in addressing it. Attention to this aspect of Socratic reception in Epictetus' thought will help us to address Bonhöffer's concern that the 'soft and passive temper' (97) of the Stoic attitude to wrongdoing advocated by Epictetus is morally inadequate to address the injustice of others. In turning toward the wrongdoer as Socrates does toward Polus and Callicles, and in treating him well by correcting his errors, a student of Epictetus' philosophy would exercise himself in the topic that corresponds to the second stage of moral development, which turns the student's progress outward by focussing on appropriate actions toward others: οὐ δεῖ γάρ με εἶναι ἀπαθῆ ὡς ἀνδριάντα, ἀλλὰ τὰς σχέσεις τηροῦντα τὰς φυσικὰς καὶ ἐπιθέτους ὡς εὐσεβῆ, ὡς υἱόν, ὡς ἀδελφόν, ὡς πατέρα, ὡς πολίτην. (3.2.4) Epictetus' striking and memorable admonition that we 'should not be free from feeling as a statue is' is as clear an indication as we could desire that Epictetus' teaching does not require its students to abandon all of their normal interpersonal attitudes along with those it deems to be irrational. In fact, freedom from passion is only the beginning of a moral training program that aims to cultivate better ways of relating to other

people just as much as it aims to free the student from emotional distress.³⁶ This is as true in our relationship to wrongdoers as it is toward anyone else; once the therapy of the emotions has done away with hostile reactions toward others, it becomes possible for the progressing student to develop correct responses in their place.³⁷ Socrates, whose concern for others guided his project of improving and correcting them, again offers an ideal model of how to engage with a wrongdoer—since he approaches them with all the goodwill of a fellow citizen and yet treats their mistakes with the fullest moral seriousness—and again it is his example that helps to structure Epictetus' view of the interpersonal moral attitudes in this regard.

We have seen that the Socrates of the *Apology*, thanks to his conviction that the independence of his mind insulates him from the possibility of interpersonal harm, could maintain an exemplary freedom from anger even when he knew that his accusers were guilty of serious wrongdoing. The same work, through its embedded dialogue with Meletus, provides an opportunity for Socrates to declare his own view of how the wrongdoing of another should be addressed. He tells the jury that Meletus, in prosecuting Socrates for the wrong he alleges, is acting wrongly himself. Even on the assumption that Socrates does indeed corrupt the youth of

³⁶ For sensitive discussion of the relationship between the cultivation of an undisturbed inner state and the exercise of other-regarding virtue see Annas ('Moral Perspectives in Epictetus', 145-149 especially) and Long (*Epictetus*, ch. 9). As Long remarks, 'Much of the reason for Epictetus' devotion to Socrates was precisely that great paradigm's civic centredness and his resolute acceptance of the conditions in which he found himself living in Athens.' (146)

³⁷ Thus the first topic rids the progressing student of his passionate or angry response to a slight, while the second enables him to hit on the appropriate other-directed response. Epictetus tells us that the third stage, in which the study of dialectic fortifies what the student has acquired in the other two stages, is for those who have already made considerable progress (3.2.5ff) in these first two stages. Though Epictetus does not appeal to it in this regard, Socrates' response to Callicles provides a promising example of how this third stage builds on progress made in the other two. It is easy to imagine that, without having fortified his beliefs through study in this topic, a progressing student could bear the insults of Callicles without anger (stage 1), and even respond to him kindly by trying to correct his mistakes (stage 2), only to collapse at last under the persuasive power of Callicles' rhetorical counterattack. This student, having already made progress in the first two stages, could rescue his own shaken convictions by going back to his teacher for help, but only someone with Socrates' dialectical excellence (stage 3) would have any hope of correcting the likes of Callicles. That Epictetus finds no fault with someone who tries, but fails, to correct someone else is consistent, not only with his views about the mind's independence, but also with his treatment of the third stage in moral education. On the relation of this stage to the other two, see Hadot, *The Inner Citadel*, 98-115 Long, *Epictetus*, 117-118

Athens, still Meletus acts wrongly by reacting wrongly to Socrates' wrongdoing, which, as Socrates sees it, can only be unwilling:

ταῦτα [viz., the charge of *willingly* corrupting the young] ἐγώ σοι οὐ πείθομαι, ὃ Μέλητε, οἶμαι δὲ οὐδὲ ἄλλον ἀνθρώπων οὐδένα. ἀλλ' ἢ οὐ διαφθείρω, ἢ εἰ διαφθείρω, ἄκων, ὥστε σύ γε κατ' ἀμφοτέρα ψεύδῃ. εἰ δὲ ἄκων διαφθείρω, τῶν τοιούτων [καὶ ἀκουσίων] ἀμαρτημάτων οὐ δεῦρο νόμος εἰσάγειν ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ ἰδίᾳ λαβόντα διδάσκειν καὶ νουθετεῖν· δηλὸν γάρ ὅτι ἐὰν μάθω, παύσομαι ὃ γε ἄκων ποιῶ. σὺ δὲ συγγενέσθαι μὲν μοι καὶ διδάξαι ἔφυγες καὶ οὐκ ἠθέλησας, δεῦρο δὲ εἰσάγεις, οἷ νόμος ἐστίν εἰσάγειν τοὺς κολάσεως δεομένους ἀλλ' οὐ μαθήσεως. (25e6-26a8)

I do not believe you when you say that, Meletus, and I don't think anyone else will either. No, either I don't corrupt them, or else if I do, I do it unwillingly. Either way, your charge is false. And if I do corrupt them unwillingly, it is not the law to bring me here, but to take me aside in private, and teach and admonish me. For it is clear that if I learn, I will stop what I am doing unwillingly. But you fled association with me and refused to teach me, and instead you bring me here, where it is the law to bring those in need of punishment rather than teaching.

Meletus, in seeking punishment, seeks to harm Socrates in return for the wrongs alleged in his indictment.³⁸ Socrates' remonstrance is founded on his own way of responding to others' mistakes: rather than wishing them harm, one ought to correct them, just as Socrates habitually does, through a private conversation. There is an exact parallel for this admonition in *Republic* I, where in response to Thrasymachus' angry and even threatening behaviour, Socrates protests that whatever mistakes he has made should be met with correction, and not with harsh treatment:

ᾧ Θρασύμαχε, μὴ χαλεπὸς ἡμῖν ἴσθι· εἰ γὰρ ἐξαμαρτάνομεν ἐν τῇ τῶν λόγων σκέψει ἐγώ τε καὶ ὅδε, εὖ ἴσθι ὅτι ἄκοντες ἀμαρτάνομεν. ... ἐλεεῖσθαι οὖν ἡμᾶς πολὺ μᾶλλον εἰκὸς ἐστίν πού ὑπὸ ὑμῶν τῶν δεινῶν ἢ χαλεπαίνεισθαι. (*Republic* 1.336e2-4, 337a1-2)

Don't be cross with us, Thrasymachus. If my friend and I are going wrong in our investigation, you may be sure that we err unwillingly. ... It's therefore far more

³⁸ That Socrates considers (reasonably, of course) that Meletus is trying to harm him by having him punished is made clear by 30c10 and 41e1. Socrates' contrast between punishment and improvement in this passage does not raise a conflict with the claims of *Gorg.* 477-479, where correct punishment is construed as a benefit and therefore a kind of improvement; Socrates is speaking in Meletus' terms, as if punishment were something other than correction.

seemly that we should be pitied by the likes of you than that you should be angry with us.

Here, as in his exchange with Meletus, Socrates calls for a Socratic response to his own mistakes, founding his appeal on an application to himself of the ‘no one does wrong willingly’ paradox.³⁹ In both cases he admits the possibility that he could be going or doing wrong, but rejects the possibility that his mistake could be deliberate. This is not to be taken as an exculpatory plea, since it does not deny the commission of a very grave error, but rather it is an attempt to correct the other person’s wrong response to an error he has mischaracterized.

In a pair of closely related discourses, Epictetus elaborates his own version of the proper response to wrongdoing, which follows Socrates in presenting teaching as the proper reaction to wrong that is always done involuntarily, while properly allowing for the offender’s guilt. *Discourses* 1.18 and 1.28 both assert the ‘no one does wrong willingly’ paradox, submitting it as a reason to suspend anger toward the wrongdoer. This is not because the wrongdoer is not guilty, but because no other response to the wrongdoer’s guilt could be rational. In both discourses, Epictetus marshals Socratic arguments to show, against the objections of his interlocutors, that anger is not the right response to the wrongdoing of another. He does not use the Socratic paradox to excuse the wrongdoer (just as Socrates refrains from anger at *Ap.* 41 but still blames the hostile jurors for their actions), but to improve a second party’s response to the crime by correcting his understanding of the psychology of wrong action and of the values relevant to the other’s action and to his own. Other key Socratic thoughts are also at work in these discourses: the claim that assent is unforced and its corollary that no one can harm a good man (which Epictetus sums up in the statement (4.2.4) that no one controls another’s *hegemonikon*) entail that the wrongdoer is fully responsible for his or her actions, and Epictetus’

³⁹ Cf. Socrates’ very similar application of his paradox to himself at *Gorg.* 488a2-6.

approach depends on taking this seriously. The ignorance behind the wrongdoer's action is culpable—in fact, it just is vice—and Epictetus takes a Socratic approach to this as well, in insisting that the wrongdoer cannot become better until he acknowledges the conflicts involved in his false beliefs. Thus the patient treatment Epictetus advocates is not, like the Strawsonian objective attitude, founded on an excuse that denies the agency behind a wrong act; rather, the goal of his approach is to engage the wrongdoer on this rational level, helping him to realize his mistake so that he can begin to improve.⁴⁰

Both 1.18 and 1.28 begin with an elaboration of the psychological claim that no one assents to what he believes to be false, from which it is understood to follow that no one chooses to do what he believes to be wrong. In 1.28 this is identified with an explicit statement of the Socratic Paradox:

ὅταν οὖν τις συγκατατίθεται τῷ ψεύδει, ἴσθι ὅτι οὐκ ἤθελεν ψεύδει συγκατατίθεσθαι·
 πᾶσα γὰρ ψυχὴ ἄκουσα στέρεται τῆς ἀληθείας, ὥς λέγει Πλάτων· ἀλλὰ ἔδοξεν αὐτῷ
 τὸ ψεῦδος ἀληθές. ἄγε ἐπὶ δὲ τῶν πράξεων τί ἔχομεν τοιοῦτον οἷον ἐνθάδε τὸ ἀληθές
 ἢ τὸ ψεῦδος; τὸ καθήκον καὶ τὸ παρὰ τὸ καθήκον, τὸ συμφέρον καὶ τὸ ἀσύμφορον,
 τὸ κατ' ἐμὲ καὶ ὅσα τούτοις ὅμοια. (1.28.4-5)

So when someone assents to a falsehood, know that he did not want to assent to something false—for every soul is unwillingly deprived of truth, as Plato says—rather, the falsehood seemed true to him. Now, what do we have in the realm of actions that is like the true and false in that realm? The appropriate and inappropriate, the productive and the unproductive, what is my concern, and so on.

Whatever Socrates or his Platonic persona may have meant by the claim that no one does wrong willingly, it is clear from his exposition that Epictetus understands it as a fact about the cognitive structure of volition: one cannot choose what one takes to be the wrong choice any more than one can believe what one takes to be a false belief.⁴¹ When an interlocutor raises the

⁴⁰ The contrast between the Stoic attitude to wrongdoers and the Strawsonian objective is further developed in the next chapter of this dissertation.

⁴¹ cf. 2.22.36. Schenkl (*ad loc.*) adduces *Sophist* 228c as the source of Epictetus' quotation of Plato: ψυχὴν γε ἴσμεν ἄκουσαν πᾶσαν πᾶν ἀγνοοῦσαν. Oldfather (*ad loc.*) remarks that Epictetus' quotation is a 'rather free paraphrase'

example of Medea (Πῶς ἢ λέγουσα· καὶ μανθάνω μὲν οἷα δρᾶν μέλλω κακά, / θυμὸς δὲ κρείσσων τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων; (1.28.7)—What about the woman who says: ‘I know what evils I intend to do, but anger overwhelms my deliberations’?) Epictetus deals quickly with this objection to the motivational intellectualism he has just presented, by showing how easily the Stoic view can accommodate it: Medea simply thought that satisfying her anger was more important than keeping her children alive. (1.28.7)⁴² Though Epictetus clearly intends his claim that no soul is ever willingly deprived of the truth to be important to the correct way of regarding wrongdoers, this statement of the Socratic Paradox certainly cannot be meant to deny that wrongdoers are responsible for their actions in the sense that is relevant to his own claims about what is up to us and what is not.⁴³ Wrongdoing cannot be involuntary in the sense of not falling under our control; in fact, it is only because wrongdoing is up to the wrongdoer that it can make that person miserable, which is exactly why no one can do it willingly. For if ‘unwillingly’ were used in a sense in which unwilling wickedness is not wickedness at all, this

of his source. We might compare our modern use of a single concise formula (‘No one does wrong willingly’, or variations on it) to refer to a doctrine that is actually expressed in different ways throughout Plato’s dialogues. In his edition of Marcus, where the quotation recurs at VII.63, Dalfen pertinently adds a reference to Resp. 412e-413a, which may be the truer source of the quotation: Ἐγὼ σοι, ἔφην, ἐρῶ. φαίνεται μοι δόξα ἐξίναί ἐκ διανοίας ἢ ἐκουσίως ἢ ἀκουσίως· ἐκουσίως μὲν ἢ ψευδῆς τοῦ μανθάναντος, ἀκουσίως δὲ πᾶσα ἢ ἀληθής.—Τὸ μὲν ἐκουσίον, ἔφη, μανθάνω, τὸ δὲ τῆς ἀκουσίου δέομαι μαθεῖν.—Τί δέ; οὐ καὶ σὺ ἡγῇ, τῶν μὲν ἀγαθῶν ἀκουσίως στέρεσθαι τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, τῶν δὲ κακῶν ἐκουσίως; ἢ οὐ τὸ μὲν ἐνγεῦσθαι τῆς ἀληθείας κακόν, τὸ δὲ ἀληθεύειν ἀγαθόν;

⁴² In these lines, does the word θυμός pick out a psychological faculty or simply Medea’s anger? Dobbin, whose valuable commentary on this passage provides many references to earlier Stoic discussions of Medea, suggests *ad loc* that Epictetus has made a small concession to multipartite understandings of the soul, and in his translation leaves *thumos* untranslated. (Oldfather opts explicitly for the ‘faculty’ reading and translates ‘spirit’. Hard, on the other hand, opts for ‘anger’, as does Souillhé, who translates ‘courroux’.) Though certainly θυμός often has a technical meaning in philosophical discussion, in Euripides’ line it almost certainly refers to the emotion, not the faculty, and there is no need to impute this concession to Epictetus. For the Stoic reading of these lines, which figured prominently in Chrysippus’ discussion of Medea, see C. Gill, ‘Did Chrysippus understand Medea?’ *Phronesis*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (1983), pp. 136-149.

⁴³ Long: ‘The Socratic principle that Epictetus invokes is often described as the principle that ‘No one sins willingly’. But that slogan is ambiguous and liable to misrepresent Socrates’ claim completely. It does not mean that people are not responsible for wrongs they commit or that their actions are involuntary *from their point of view as agents*. What it means is that, if wrongdoing is construed Socratically as bad for the doer, it is never strictly perceived as bad at the moment of action, by those who do wrong. You cannot really mean it if you say with Milton’s Satan: Evil be thou my Good.’ (*Epictetus*, 250, my emphasis) Long’s appeal to a personal perspective in order to explain Epictetus’ use of the Socratic paradox is very much in line with the interpretation I offer here.

would undermine the idea that supports the paradox. Taking account of this, Epictetus urges the imagined bystander to show her this error instead of treating her harshly:

Δεῖξον αὐτὴν ἐναργῶς ὅτι ἐξηπάτηται καὶ οὐ ποιήσει· μέχρι δ' ἂν οὐ μὴ δεικνύῃς, τίτιν ἔχει ἀκολουθεῖν ἢ τῷ φαινομένῳ; οὐδενί. Τί οὖν χαλεπαίνει αὐτῇ, ὅτι πεπλάνηται ἢ ταλαίπωρος περὶ τῶν μεγίστων καὶ ἔχῃς ἀντὶ ἀνθρώπου γέγονεν; εἴπερ ἄρα, μᾶλλον ἐλεεῖς, ὡς τοὺς τυφλοὺς ἐλεοῦμεν, ὡς τοὺς χωλοὺς, οὕτως τοὺς τὰ κυριώτατα τετυφλεμένους καὶ ἀποκεχώλωμένους; (1.28.8-9)

Show her clearly that she is mistaken and she will not do it. Until you show her, what does she have to follow but the way things appear to her? Nothing. Why, then, are you angry with her? Because the miserable woman has gone astray concerning the greatest things, and has become a serpent rather than a human being? If anything, pity her. As we pity the blind and the limping, so too might we not pity those who have been blinded and made to limp concerning the most important things?

The psychology of wrong action that Epictetus has described is readily employed in the service of the response to wrongdoing. Not only does the miserable condition of the wrongdoer promote pity as preferable to anger (εἴπερ ἄρα, ‘if anything’), but the account of why the wrongdoer has acted as she did points the way toward an effective interpersonal response.⁴⁴ It is her failure to realize the gross falsity of this belief that has made her wicked, and it is only when she comes to see this that she can become better. Rather than becoming angry, Epictetus’s student can work toward freeing Medea from her error by helping her to see it.

What is primarily at issue in this *Discourse*, as in 1.28, is not after all the responsibility of wrongdoers like Medea, but rather the response that should be directed toward them. In fact, Epictetus is explicit about his purpose in calling the Socratic paradox to his students’ attention:

Ὅστις οὖν τούτου μέμνηται καθαρῶς ὅτι ἀνθρώπῳ μέτρον πάσης πράξεως τὸ φαινόμενον (λοιπὸν ἢ καλῶς φαίνεται ἢ κακῶς· εἰ καλῶς, ἀνέγκλητός ἐστιν· εἰ κακῶς, αὐτὸς ἐζημίωνται· οὐ γὰρ ἄλλος μὲν εἶναι ὁ πεπλανημένος, ἄλλος δ' ὁ βλαπτόμενος), οὐδενὶ ὀργισθήσεται, οὐδενὶ χαλεπαινεῖ, οὐδένα λοιδορήσει, οὐδένα μέμψεται, οὐ προσκόψει οὐδενί. (1.28.10)

⁴⁴ Cf. the mention of pity at 1.18.9. That Epictetus so qualifiedly proposes pity as a response to Medea suggests that he is trying to mediate between the orthodoxy of his school, which rejects pity, and his reading of Socratic sources (such as *Republic* 336, above) that suggest one should pity the erring. His own startling discussion of tragedy and epic in the latter part of this discourse (1.28.12-23) shows that he does in fact reject this paradigmatically tragic response to the state of Euripides’ heroine.

Whoever clearly remembers that to a human being the measure of every action is the way things appear—and moreover that they appear either rightly or wrongly, and if rightly, the person is not liable to accusation; if wrongly, he suffers his own punishment, for it is not possible that it should be one person who has gone astray and another who has been harmed—will not be angry with anyone, will not be cross with anyone, will not revile anyone, will not take offence at anyone.

By keeping a clear view of why others do wrong, an agent can improve his own response to their actions.⁴⁵ Such a thought will explain, though of course it will not justify, the wrong action, and allows the person responding to approach, in the abstract, an understanding of the wrongdoer's motives, at least insofar as they are directed toward the same goal, generally construed. Moreover, remembering that the penalty for wrongdoing is contained in the act itself is likely to offset the desire to impose an external punishment. The thought of the offender's error will also remind the attentive student to avoid making such errors herself: if Medea went so badly wrong by thinking it was better to gratify anger at an oath-breaker like Jason than to save her own children, then one should guard all the more watchfully against the thought that it is better to gratify anger at a murderer like Medea than to preserve the natural bonds among rational creatures. This one can do by reacting without anger, and trying instead to help the wrongdoer see where she went wrong. There is thus both a negative and a positive side to Epictetus' account of the wrongdoer's psychology: it supports the rejection of anger and also grounds a rational response that is suitable to take its place.

The same thoughts are at work in 1.18 where, as in 1.28, Epictetus begins by explaining that the philosophical psychology which shows that wrong is done involuntarily also shows that it is wrong to take a hostile stance toward the erring. His interlocutors object that many people are 'thieves and robbers' and that this gives a reason to treat them harshly; if a man is a

⁴⁵ This interpretation is confirmed by Epictetus' other statement of the same claim at 2.22.36, where he describes in the following terms the person who is truly prepared to form friendships: ...τῷ μὲν ὁμοίῳ παντὶ ἀπλῶς, τοῦ δ' ἀνομοίου ἀνεκτικός, πρῶτος πρὸς αὐτόν, ἡμέρος, συγγνωμικός ὡς πρὸς ἀγνοοῦντα, ὡς πρὸς διαπίπτοντα περὶ τῶν μεγίστων· οὐδενὶ χαλεπός, ἅτ' εἰδὼς ἀκριβῶς τὸ τοῦ Πλάτωνος, ὅτι πᾶσα ψυχὴ ἄκουσα στέρεται τῆς ἀληθείας.

‘brigand’ or an ‘adulterer’, he ought to be put to death. (1.18.3-5) Instructing them to reflect on how they would rebuke themselves if they directed these feelings toward someone whose impairment was not moral, but physical, he reproaches his interlocutors for their cruelty: to think as they do is ‘inhuman’ (ἀνάνθρωπον, 1.18.7), just as it would be if they called for a man’s execution on the grounds of his blindness. The inhumanity of their response lies in the hatred (τὸ μισητικόν) that they direct toward the wrongdoer. Calling for the wrongdoer’s execution, they must do so on the assumption that this would cause that person harm, as did those who voted to condemn Socrates (*Apology* 41e1), but this is only because they believe that they themselves, or some other person with whom they identify, have been harmed. As Epictetus tells his audience, we become angry because we ‘admire the materials’ (ὕλας θαυμάζομεν) that the dishonest man takes from us, which makes us think that we have been harmed.⁴⁶ Here again, a correct reaction to wrongdoing depends on a correct assessment of the wrongdoer’s condition in order to orient the responder’s stance toward the offender.

Epictetus’ approach in these two discourses, while it highlights the miserable condition of the wrongdoer and the thought that no one could willingly become so wretched, does not minimize the offender’s wickedness but rather actually emphasizes it. For it is exactly by dint of being wicked that the wrongdoer is miserable: if we pity Medea for having become a viper rather than a human being, it is not because we think her suffering is unfair, or anyone’s fault but hers—it is rather because she has fallen so far short of her proper condition as a rational being.⁴⁷ Seen in this light, the crucial doctrine that no one controls another’s *hegemonikon* is

⁴⁶ For this inference, see also 1.22.13-14: (13) — ... Ἐνδέχεται οὖν βλαπτόμενον καὶ ἀποτυγχάνοντα τῶν ἀγαθῶν εὐδαιμονεῖν; — οὐκ ἐνδέχεται. — καὶ τὴν πρὸς τοὺς κοινωνοὺς ἔχειν οἷαν δεῖ ἀναστροφὴν; καὶ πῶς ἐνδέχεται; ἐγὼ γὰρ πέφυκα πρὸς τὸ ἐμὸν συμφέρον. (14) Εἰ συμφέρει μοι ἱμάτιον ἔχειν, συμφέρει μοι καὶ κλέψαι αὐτὸ ἐκ βαλανείου. Ἐνθεν πόλεμοι, στάσεις, τυραννίδες, ἐπιβουλαί.

⁴⁷ Cf. *De Ben.* 1.13.3 where Alexander, likewise described as misguided and as harmful to those who should be close to him, is also compared to a snake.

doubly applicable to instances of wrongdoing. From the responder's perspective, it means that the action has done nothing to them that might force their assent to any new belief, which is all that could have done them good or ill. Thus the person who responds to another's wrongdoing has no reason to consider himself harmed. ('οὐ δύναται γὰρ ἄλλος μὲν εἶναι πεπλανημένος, ἄλλος δ' ὁ βλαπτόμενος.' 1.28.10) Considered from the perspective of the wrongdoer, however, this doctrine entails that, if the action was indeed wrong, then it must have depended on his own assent. This rules out any chance of attributing the wrong act to anything other than the wrongdoer's own agency. Thus, even though Epictetus attributes her actions to ignorance, he also shows that Medea's wickedness is squarely due to her having assented to the thought that she should kill her children. Her wickedness can be measured by the enormity of this error, as the overwhelming passion that caused her to act was exactly identical with this.

On Epictetus' Stoic principles, philosophical correction is not only the response to wrongdoing that is most effective in improving the wrongdoer's character, but also the only effective response possible. For when action is judged not by its effects, but by the coherence of the principles that underlie it, it is impossible to prevent injustice simply by keeping the wrongdoer in check. If the unjust person is merely cowed by the anger of another, and so refrains from an unjust action he intended, the injustice has been committed nonetheless, just by virtue of his having wanted to commit it.⁴⁸ Long has aptly remarked, in connection with Epictetus' Socratic pedagogy:

Epictetus' greatness as a philosopher is his realization that the only ethical argument that can be suitable to human dignity is an argument that persons are shown how to apply to themselves, doing so not because they are told their duty by an authority but

⁴⁸ As Prof. Inwood has suggested to me, this resembles Socrates' discussion of false motives in the *Phaedo*; on this see also Erler's article on Epictetus' use of the *Phaedo*, esp. 105-106 on the use of bugbear stories.

because they are presented with reasons they are competent to examine, test, and if they find them cogent, internalize.

This view applies with equal truth, and perhaps with greater urgency, to the treatment due to a wrongdoer who stands in need of correction.⁴⁹ A wrongdoer, by her crime, may cast off her human dignity as she becomes, in Epictetus' words, a viper rather than a human being, but this provides no reason to act inhumanly toward her. Given her miserable state, a person who has made some progress would do well to respond with pity in the place of anger. The philosopher, however, will not indulge in pity (which is itself contrary to nature, and liable to motivate the wrong response), but instead take action. It is the task of philosophical correction to help the wrongdoer recover her dignity by bringing her to the realization that her actions are, or were, wrong. Thus on the Stoic view of wrongdoing that Epictetus advocates, the wrongdoer is held fully accountable for the moral mistake that caused him to commit a crime he could never have rationally willed. In fact, it is only by acknowledging this failure that a philosophical observer can duly account for the rationality that is essential to the wrongdoer's nature, however he may have failed to exercise it rightly. Likewise, the goal of philosophical correction is to help the wrongdoer acknowledge the failure as well; in doing this, rather than in responding with anger, the responder respects both the wrongdoer's rationality and his own.

⁴⁹ For another way of emphasizing the importance of autonomy in Epictetus' thought on moral progress, see the important discussion by Rachana Kamtekar, 'Aidôs in Epictetus' *Classical Philology*, Vol. 93, No. 2. (Apr., 1998), pp. 136-160, esp. 155-160

Marcus Aurelius: Action and Reaction

Whether we begin our reading of Marcus' notebooks with the independent first book or with the second, we find that anger, or freedom from it, is the first subject considered.¹ The first book opens with a citation of the fine character and the freedom from anger shown by his grandfather, Annius Verus, and the second with a kind of *praemeditatio* on the inevitability of others' wrongdoing:

(1) Ἔωθεν προλέγειν ἑαυτῷ συντεύξομαι περιέρῳ, ἀχαρίστῳ, ὕβριστῇ, δολερῷ, βασκανῷ, ἀκοινωνήτῳ. (2) πάντα ταῦτα συμβέβηκεν ἐκείνοις παρὰ τὴν ἀγνοίαν τῶν ἀγαθῶν καὶ κακῶν. (3) ἐγὼ δὲ τεθεωρηκῶς τὴν φύσιν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ὅτι καλὸν καὶ τοῦ κακοῦ ὅτι αἰσχρὸν καὶ τὴν φύσιν αὐτοῦ τοῦ ἀμαρτάναντος φύσιν ὅτι μοι συγγενῆς, οὐχὶ αἵματος ἢ σπέρματος τοῦ αὐτοῦ, ἀλλὰ νοῦ καὶ θείας ἀπομοίρας μέτοχος, οὔτε βλαβῆναι ὑπὸ τινος αὐτῶν δύναμαι· αἰσχρῷ γάρ με οὐδεὶς περιβαλεῖ· οὔτε ὀργίζεσθαι τῷ συγγενεῖ δύναμαι οὔτε ἀπέχθεσθαι αὐτῷ. (4) γεγόναμεν γὰρ πρὸς συνεργίαν, ὡς πόδες, ὡς χεῖρες, ὡς βλέφαρα, ὡς οἱ στοῖχοι τῶν ἄνω καὶ κάτω ὀδόντων. (5) τὸ οὖν ἀντιπράσσειν ἀλλήλοις παρὰ φύσιν· ἀντιπρακτικὸν δὲ τὸ ἀγανακτεῖν καὶ ἀποστρέφεσθαι.

(1) Say to yourself first thing in the morning: I shall meet with people who are meddling, ungrateful, violent, treacherous, envious, and unsociable. (2) They are subject to these faults because of their ignorance of what is good and bad. (3) But I have recognized the nature of the good and seen that it is the right, and the nature of the bad and seen that it is the wrong, and the nature of the wrongdoer himself, and seen that he is related to me, not because he has the same blood or seed, but because he shares in the same mind and portion of divinity. So I cannot be harmed by any of them, as no one will involve me in what is wrong. Nor can I be angry with my relative or hate him. (4) We were born for cooperation, like feet, like hands, like eyelids, like the rows of upper and lower teeth. (5) So to work against each other is contrary to nature; and resentment and rejection count as working against someone. (II.1., tr. C. Gill)

¹ A word regarding the title of Marcus' philosophical work: As Hadot (*The Inner Citadel*, xvii) observes, the French title *Pensées* carries generic baggage by evoking Pascal; *Meditations*, the traditional English title, similarly prejudices our view of what Marcus is doing in this work. I shall prefer to refer to Marcus' book as his 'philosophical notebooks', but I shall understand this as a description rather than a title. (If this name recalls any modern author, it will not be Pascal but Wittgenstein, and I am not troubled by this suggestive association; in strictly generic terms, I cannot think of any work that more closely resembles Marcus' book than Wittgenstein's *Notebooks 1914-1916*, written during wartime on the Eastern Front.) Of course, it also translates the Greek word ὑπομνημάτια, which at III.14 may or may not be used by Marcus to refer to this particular book, as Matteo Ceperina ('The *Meditations*' in Marcel van Ackeren, *A Companion to Marcus Aurelius*, 45-61, [Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.], 45) asserts it is; Hadot, *The Inner Citadel*, 45-49, is more cautious, but concludes that it describes the genre of the work, at least.

The movement of this passage aptly illustrates the workings of Marcus' emotional therapy, and it raises several topics to which Marcus will return throughout his notebooks, and which we shall have the occasion to discuss in the course of this chapter. Marcus begins the entry with a reminder to himself that, each day, he must expect to encounter people who act badly; this highlights the daily importance of the problem with which this study is concerned, namely the question of how to react to others' wrongdoing. He then goes on to invoke several core beliefs of Stoic ethics, beginning with the famous Socratic claim that all wrongdoing is a matter of moral ignorance. Contrasting this ignorance with the knowledge he has acquired through philosophy, he draws attention to his own epistemically (and hence ethically) privileged position, while beginning to explain the actions of wrongdoers and reminding himself of what the wrongdoer would need in order to improve. He then specifies two ways in which his philosophical training is particularly relevant to the response to wrongdoing: philosophy has shown him that on a true assessment of what is good and bad, nothing another has done can harm him, and it has also taught him to consider the relationship that obtains between him and the wrongdoer, which is a kind of kinship they share by virtue of being rational. The first of these points removes the grounds for anger, while the second goes beyond this to explain exactly why anger is problematic. The order of things is such that human beings ought to work with rather than against each other, a point made vivid by a series of similes that compare the natural cooperation among people to the equally natural functioning of paired body parts (section 4).² The final section of this entry draws the inference that, as working together is

² The working relationship these similes depict is closer than what is shown by the traditional image of the 'body politic', and is more egalitarian. The two feet, the two hands, and the two rows of teeth are naturally paired sets, and they collaborate on exactly the same terms. The hands and feet (but not the teeth) occur in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (2.3.18), where Socrates uses the image to illustrate the providentially ordained relation of one brother to another, again in a context where anger is at issue. (Cf. [p.8 n.9] for Epictetus' use of the same chapter of the *Memorabilia*.)

natural, and as feelings of resentment count as working against other people, these feelings are contrary to nature. Thus it is a social end, prescribed as it is by nature, that motivates Marcus' Stoic rejection of anger. Like many others we shall see, this passage makes it clear that what Marcus seeks is not merely the serenity that comes from abandoning a troublesome emotion; rather, he understands the elimination of anger as necessary to the cultivation of interpersonal relationships as they are naturally ordained. To attain this goal, he must learn to respond correctly when he meets with the failings he is bound to encounter in others.

This is a topic to which he will return with striking regularity in his notebooks, which show us just how preoccupied he is by the special way in which other people can complicate his own moral activity. Marcus is acutely conscious of the peculiar challenge of acting morally in a world where he is not the only moral agent, and where those others may stand in the way of his projects or perform actions that might seem to be harmful to him, at least on a pre-philosophical understanding of harm. Like the other Imperial Stoics, Marcus takes a strong interest in the philosophy of moral response. At times he tells himself to treat obstructions that others cause as if they were the work of natural, non-living forces (that is, at V.20, for which see below), but most often he calls on himself to regard other people, even when they offend, with the love and affection that is due to every human being, and not the anger many people feel at first brush. Christopher Gill has already observed the relevance of Strawsonian reactive attitudes to a description of Marcus' emotional therapy, and particularly to his reflections on anger. In this, Gill has made an important point, and I quote his comments at length:

Marcus' work also illustrates the nature of Stoic thinking on the emotional dimension of interpersonal life. This can be brought out by referring to Peter Strawson's distinction between 'reactive' and 'objective' attitudes. As Marcus illustrates, Stoicism does, indeed, aim to produce detachment from many of the emotions (or 'reactive attitudes') often generated within interpersonal relationships, such as anger and grief, which Stoics see as based on false conceptions of what really matters. ... But Marcus also reflects the fact that Stoic theory also promotes other kinds of

emotional response, including certain kinds of love and admiration, which are in line with well-grounded value-judgements. Since most people, as Stoics are well aware, have emotions or reactive attitudes based on misguided beliefs, our treatment of other people needs to acknowledge—without mirroring—this response. This leads to a rather complex, indirect response to (most) other people, which is similar to Strawson's 'objective' attitude, and this indirectness may give the impression of detachment or coldness. But Marcus indicates the humanity of approach underlying this response, while also underlining the need not to be drawn into unconsidered reactive attitudes oneself.³

What Gill has aptly called 'the emotional dimension of interpersonal life' is precisely the object of this study, particularly when it comes to the interpersonal situations that often give rise to anger.⁴ This chapter builds on Gill's suggestive observations, while also showing how the interpersonal attitude Marcus tries to cultivate is much richer and more ethically productive than the objective attitude that Strawson described as impossible for a human being to sustain. I shall begin by exploring how Marcus conceives of his own activity in relation to the potentially obstructive behaviour of other people, with special attention to his treatment of the elusive notions of 'reservation' (ὑπεξάρεσις) and 'reversal' (περιτροπή), and then consider how Marcus' concern for the persuasive correction of wrongdoers acknowledges their agency in a way that importantly differentiates his approach from the Strawsonian objective attitude. For Marcus, such correction is made possible by the shared rationality of all human agents, which calls not only for tolerance, but for affectionate concern.

Gill has quite rightly described Marcus' approach as similar to Strawson's objective attitude, without claiming that the two are just the same. The two attitudes are importantly similar in that they involve suspending affective responses to other people—and in both cases, anger (Strawson's resentment) is the prime example—not because a matter of circumstance makes a particular response inappropriate, but because we consider it inappropriate in general to

³ Christopher Gill, *Marcus Aurelius: Books 1-6* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), xlviii-xlix

⁴ Gill, of course, is talking about both anger and grief, but the two are related insofar as they concern what other people do or what happens to them; both are paradigmatically interpersonal emotions.

direct these reactive attitudes toward them. There is, however, a crucial difference between the two approaches, in that whereas Strawson describes the objective attitude as a way of regarding someone as if they had no agency at all—a point he illustrates by comparing our attitudes to young children or to those suffering from severe mental illness—the attitude Marcus recommends is one that allows for a serious estimation of another’s agency.⁵ There is one passage that appears to come closer than any other to advocating the objective attitude as Strawson describes it:

(1) Καθ’ ἕτερον μὲν λόγον ἡμῖν ἐστὶν οἰκειότατον ἄνθρωπος, καθ’ ὅσον εὖ ποιητέον αὐτοὺς καὶ ἀνεκτέον· καθ’ ὅσον δὲ ἐνίστανται τινες εἰς τὰ οἰκεῖα ἔργα, ἔν τι τῶν ἀδιαφόρων μοι γίνεται ὁ ἄνθρωπος οὐχ ἥσσον ἢ ἥλιος ἢ ἄνεμος ἢ θηρίον. (2) ὑπὸ τούτων δὲ ἐνέργεια μὲν τις ἐμποδισθεῖν ἄν, ὁρμῆς δὲ καὶ διαθέσεως οὐ γίνεται ἐμπόδια διὰ τὴν ὑπεξαίρεσιν καὶ τὴν περιτροπὴν. (3) περιτρέπει γὰρ καὶ μεθίστησι πᾶν τὸ τῆς ἐνεργείας κώλυμα ἢ διάνοια εἰς τὸ προηγούμενον καὶ πρὸ ἔργου γίνεται τὸ τοῦ ἔργου τούτου ἐφεκτικὸν καὶ πρὸ ὁδοῦ τὸ τῆς ὁδοῦ ταύτης ἐνστατικόν.

On one line of reasoning, a human being is the closest thing to us, insofar as we must do good to them and exercise forbearance toward them, but insofar as some of them obstruct our own proper actions, the human being becomes one of those things that are indifferent to me, no less than sun or wind or wild beast. A given activity may be impeded by them, but to impulse and disposition there are no impediments, because of reservation and reversal. For the mind reverses and transposes every hindrance to its activity into its objective and what holds up the activity comes to help the activity and what blocks the path comes to help us on that path. (V.20)⁶

Here it is important to note that Marcus’ thought is focused very closely on the attitude of an agent whose activity has been obstructed (in contrast, that is, with other passages which emphasize the disposition of the person causing the obstruction, such as *e.g.* III.4.8). What occupies Marcus is the ‘delicate balance’ that characterizes Stoic attitudes to other people; though the first sentence points to an apparent tension between natural moral regard for others

⁵ Strawson, ‘Freedom and Resentment’, repr. in Michael McKenna and Paul Russell, *Free Will and Reactive Attitudes*, 19-36 (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 23-25

⁶ As elsewhere in this dissertation, translations not otherwise attributed are my own. In this chapter, however, I am very much in debt to Gill’s excellent translation of the first six books of Marcus, which I occasionally use for quotations; if elsewhere my translation echoes his, it is because after consulting his version I could not see how the text could be rendered any better.

and the kind of indifference that their obstructive actions should have for us, Marcus does not find a conflict here, but rather a striking harmony.⁷ Other-directed concern is a constant feature of the moral life that Marcus envisions, and the contrast this passage describes cannot be between the times when we must treat others well and times we must treat them badly, but rather between the actions that nature requires of us (which involve cooperation with other people, as we have seen) and the reactions that we ought to have to wrongdoing of theirs when it seems to affect us. When he compares other people to forces without agency, Marcus has in mind the quality of his own reaction, and he means that whether the obstruction is caused by a human being or by the forces of nature, he should accept it with the same grace either way. For although another's wrongdoing is indeed bad for the wrongdoer himself, such absolute value is agent-specific, as attested at VIII.56, where indifference to others' bad actions is again juxtaposed with the closeness of human beings to one another:

(1) Τῷ ἐμῷ προαιρετικῷ τὸ τοῦ πλησίον προαιρετικὸν ἐπίσης ἀδιάφορόν ἐστιν, ὡς καὶ τὸ πνευμάτιον αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸ σαρκίδιον. (2) καὶ γὰρ εἰ ὅτι μάλιστα ἀλλήλων ἔνεκεν γεγόναμεν, ὅμως τὰ ἡγεμονικὰ ἡμῶν ἕκαστον τὴν ἰδίαν κυρίαν ἔχει· ἐπεὶ τοι ἔμελλεν ἢ τοῦ πλησίον κακία ἐμοῦ κακὸν εἶναι, ὅπερ οὐκ ἔδοξε τῷ θεῷ, ἵνα μὴ ἐπ' ἄλλῳ ἢ τὸ ἐμὲ ἀτυχεῖν.

To my *prohairesis* the *prohairesis* of my neighbour is a matter of indifference, just as much as are his bit of breath and his paltry flesh. For indeed, though we have been born most of all for the sake of one another, nevertheless each of us has control over our own governing faculties; otherwise the badness of my neighbour would be a bad thing for me, and god did not see fit to make it so, in order that it should not be in another's power for me to be unfortunate.

We shall soon see that regard for others' agency is crucial to the right reaction to their wrongdoing; all that Marcus denies in these passages is that anything outside his own power can

⁷ Gill *ad loc*: 'This chapter restates one of the most common themes in *Med.*, our moral autonomy as agents, but combined here with a special focus on the implications for interpersonal relationships. Marcus begins by summarizing the (rather delicate) balance regarding other people presupposed in Stoic ethics: that we are naturally inclined to benefit others, but that our own capacity for virtue and happiness does not depend on them, and, hence, they cannot obstruct our own progress toward virtue (5.20.2, compare 2.1, 3.4)'

obstruct his well-being, which is equally true whether such obstacles are presented by other people or by non-living or irrational forces. Care for others and indifference to their obstructive actions are, for Marcus, two sides of the same coin, since anger, which distances the angry person from his fellows, depends on treating their actions as bad for him.

In V.20, Marcus tells himself that it is because of ‘reservation’ (ὑπεξαίρεσις) and ‘reversal’ (περιτροπή) that external obstacles cannot upset him. These notions, which surface in several other entries, have been the subject of important scholarly discussion in recent times, and they prove crucial to Marcus’ understanding of interpersonal moral response. Treatments by Tad Brennan and Jacques Brunschwig have built on foundational work by Brad Inwood to examine the workings of reservation, which is best attested in later Stoics and nowhere better than in Marcus.⁸ Moreover, Brunschwig’s discussion takes the important step of establishing the role of reversal as the complement of reservation. Taking this work into account, we are able to see more precisely how Marcus uses the paired concepts of reservation and reversal to describe the normative structure of interpersonal relationships, essentially by developing the idea of appropriate *actions* and *reactions*. This section is an attempt to discover the outlines of that structure insofar as it applies to events caused either by human agents or otherwise (since, as this very passage observes, the same structure supports the right reaction to both); our next section will then consider what is distinctive about the appropriate reaction to the actions of other human beings.

⁸ Brad Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism* (Oxford, 1985), 119-126 and 165-175 especially; Tad Brennan, ‘Reservation in Stoic Ethics,’ *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 82, (2000), 149-177; Jacques Brunschwig, ‘Sur deux notions de l’éthique stoïcienne: de la réserve au renversement, in *Les Stoïciens*,’ ed. G. Romeyer Dherbey & J.-B. Gourinat, Paris 2005, 357-380. The evidence is collected and translated by Brennan at 151-153 and Brunschwig at 358-362

On the subject of reservation and reversal, our evidence is not abundant. In Greek, reservation is explicitly mentioned only four times by Marcus, twice by Epictetus, and once in a doxography preserved by Stobaeus. Here I translate the relevant passages and list them as numbered by Brennan and by Brunschwig, beginning with the entries in Marcus' notebooks:

M1 (IV.1): (1) That which holds the mastery within us, when it is disposed according to nature, so stands in relation to events as to adapt easily in relation to what is given. (2) For it is not wedded to any specified material, but directs its impulse toward its objectives with reservation, while making whatever substitute is brought to it into material for itself, like fire, when it overpowers the things that fall into it, things by which a little lamp would have been extinguished. The blazing fire, however, swiftly appropriates what is piled into it, consumes it and uses those very things to grow still higher.

M2 (V.20): (1) On one line of reasoning, a human being is the closest thing to us, insofar as we must do good to them and exercise forbearance toward them, but insofar as some of them obstruct our own proper actions, the human being becomes one of those things that are indifferent to me, no less than sun or wind or wild beast. (2) A given activity may be impeded by them, but to impulse and disposition there are no impediments, because of reservation and reversal. (3) For the mind reverses and transposes every hindrance to its activity into the service of its objective and what holds up the activity comes to help the activity and what blocks the path comes to help us on that path.

M3 (VI.50): (1) Try to persuade them, but act even against their will, whenever the reasoning proper to justice leads in this direction. (2) If, however, someone uses force to obstruct you, shift to being content and free from distress, and make use of the hindrance in the service of another virtue, and remember that you were exercising impulse with reservation and that you were not desiring the impossible. What were you desiring, then? An impulse of this kind. (3) This you have got; what we made our object has come to be.

M4 (VIII.41): (1) An impediment to sensation is an evil to animal nature; likewise an impediment to impulse is an impediment to animal nature. (2) And there is something else which is likewise an impediment and an evil to the nature of a plant. So too an impediment to intelligence is an evil to intelligent nature. (3) Now apply all this to yourself: does pain or pleasure affect you? Sensation will see to it. (4) Has an obstacle arisen before you in the course of your impulse? If you form your impulse without reservation, then that is already an evil for you as a rational being, but if you grasp the obstacle in advance, even then [*viz.*, when you encounter it] you have not been harmed or hindered. [ὁρμήσαντι ἔνσθημα ἐγένετο; εἰ μὲν ἀνυπεξαίρετως ὁρμᾶς, ἤδη ὡς λογικοῦ κακόν· εἰ δὲ τὸ κωλῶν προλαμβάνεις, οὕτω βέβλῃσθαι οὐδὲ ἐμπεπόδισαι.] (5) Truly, no one else can obstruct what is proper to the mind, for neither fire, nor steel, nor despot, nor calumny nor any other thing affects it. Once it becomes a well-rounded sphere, so it remains.

To my knowledge, M4, which employs the adverb ἀνυπεξαίρετως and not the noun ὑπεξαίρεσις, has so far not been counted among the explicit mentions of reservation. All of these passages portray reservation as a feature of correctly formed impulses, as do two passages of Epictetus:

E1: (*Encheiridion* 2) (1) Remember that the promise of desire is the attainment of what you desire, and the promise of aversion is not to fall into what is the object of aversion, and that one who does not succeed in desire is unfortunate, while one who meets with the object of his aversion is misfortunate. But if you are only averse to those things contrary to nature which are up to you, you will not fall into any object of your aversion; but if you are averse to sickness, death, or poverty, you will experience misfortune. (2) Therefore withdraw your aversion from all those things which are not up to us, and transfer it to what is contrary to nature among the things that are up to us. For now, eliminate desire completely; for if you desire something that is not up to us, you will necessarily be unfortunate, while none of those things which are up to us, which it would be fine for you to desire, is yet within your grasp. Use only the exercise of impulse and its opposite, but lightly and with reservation, without straining.

E2: (*apud Marcum* XI.37) He said: It is necessary to find an art concerned with giving assent and, on the topic of impulses to guard *to prosektikon*, in order that [our impulses may be] with reservation, sociable, and in accordance with value; (2) and to hold back from desire entirely, and to use aversion toward none of the things that are not up to us.

E2 has been accepted as a fragment of Epictetus since Schweighauser (= fr. 177 Schw., Schenkl XXVII): it comes amid a series of excerpts at the end of Book XI, and the three entries that precede it, XI.34, 35 and 36, are all quotations from Epictetus. It is worth noting that XI.34 and 35, which are drawn from *Discourses* III.24, do not reproduce a continuous section of Epictetus, but rather verbatim quotations reworked to create a more compact version of Epictetus' text. In light of this there is a strong possibility that XI.37, which is likewise very compressed in its expression, also represents an abridged version of Epictetus' actual exposition. If Marcus himself made these excerpts, then E2 actually represents what he found most important about a longer passage in his source.

One more mention of ὑπεξαίρεσις in a philosophical context occurs in the doxography preserved by Stobaeus:

St1: (2.155,5-6), (1) They [the Stoics] say that the good man experiences nothing contrary to his desire or impulse or purpose on account of the fact that in all such cases he acts with reservation and encounters no obstacles which are unanticipated. (2) He is also gentle, his gentleness being a tenor by which he is gently disposed in acting always appropriately and in not being moved to anger against anyone. (LS 65W 1-2, tr. Long and Sedley, modified by the use of ‘reservation’ instead of ‘reserve’)

This passage is the clearest statement that reservation prevents the sage’s impulses from frustration, a thought that also emerges clearly from M2/V.20.⁹ The movement of this passage may suggest, though it goes not so far as to imply, that reservation promotes the sage’s disposition to gentleness, which, as this passage says quite clearly, means a complete absence of anger, and not the moderate disposition espoused by Aristotle and his followers. That it does promote the absence of anger would certainly follow from Inwood’s view that reservation is at least part of what allows the sage to steer clear of the passions.¹⁰ Here I shall argue that reservation is important to Marcus because it offers a way of interacting with other people without incurring frustration or experiencing anger; once reservation has become a settled feature of an agent’s hormetic disposition (or, as Stobaeus says, it comes to characterize all of his impulses), he will always act appropriately towards others precisely because he never reacts to them in anger. Stobaeus (like Seneca as well) is witness to the fact that Stoic authors other

⁹ I do not accept Brennan’s rather tendentious reading of this passage, on which the mention of obstacles implies that the sage’s impulses can in fact be frustrated. I do, however, agree with the claim he builds on this reading, which is that ‘the Sage changes his desires and impulses in response to what happens.’ (162-163)

¹⁰ Brennan holds (171-2) that the view rests on a ‘straightforward confusion’ about what makes an emotion for the Stoics, but what he describes as the right view (that ‘What distinguishes emotions from other impulses is that they falsely represent their objects as goods or evils’) is clearly presupposed in Inwood’s discussion, for instance at 146ff.. Brennan asserts that ‘reservation has no role to play’ in the differentiation of goods from preferred indifferents, but our sources contrast unreserved impulse, as involving the belief that a particular object of impulse is good, with the sage’s understanding that correct impulse, that is impulse with reservation, is good. This much is clear from the identification of reserved impulse with the object of ὀρεξις in M3/VI.50.2, a passage which Inwood cites twice (126, 167n.179) but which Brennan ignores in his discussion, along with the rest of Marcus’ evidence. Cf. also the suggestion in E1 that impulse with reservation allows the person who has eliminated desire to select among the things that are not up to us, i.e. indifferent things, and E2’s prescription that impulse should be at once with reservation and in accordance with value (κατ’ ἄξιν).

than Marcus, Epictetus and Seneca must have discussed reservation, but the preponderance of these authors as sources for reservation suggests that it was of particular interest to them, and to Marcus most of all.¹¹ In this discussion, I will build on a suggestion made by Gretchen Reydam-Schils, showing how this fact can be explained by these philosophers' interest in social interaction, specifically because reservation, when paired with the complementary technique of reversal, offers a framework for conceiving of actions and reactions within the contingencies of the social world. First, however, it will be helpful consider the outlines of what we know about the actual mechanism of reservation.

If we begin by examining our two texts from Epictetus, we notice that in both passages he contrasts reserved impulse with desire and aversion toward what is not up to us. Stoic value-dualism (which distinguishes between the unconditional value of virtue, and the selective value of indifferent things) is here expressed in terms of Epictetus' thematic distinction between what is up to us and what is not up to us, and it runs throughout both passages. In E1 Epictetus begins by outlining a series of truisms about desire and aversion, establishing that by the very grammar of the relevant terms, it is through failing to secure the object of desire that one is unfortunate (ὁ μὲν ἐν ὁρέξει ἀποτυγχάνων ἀτυχής, an expression appealing to etymology) and through incurring the object of aversion that one is misfortunate. This offers a reason to redirect desire and aversion toward what is within our control, since this is the only way we can consistently avoid the objects of our aversion and obtain the objects of our desire (though the beginner is

¹¹ Seneca's evidence for reservation, which he calls *exceptio*, comes from *Ben.* 4.34.4, 4.39.3-4 and *Tranqu.* 13.2f. This evidence is most useful in establishing that reservation is expressed in the form of a conditional clause, a view which all interpreters accept, though they construe it in different ways. As I will be taking this much for granted in my discussion, I leave Seneca's evidence to the side, while noting that *Ben.* 4.34.4 and *Ben.* 4.39.3-4 occur in explicitly social contexts (which are, of course, pervasive in the *De Beneficiis*). See Inwood 119-123; the passages are assembled by Brennan at 152-153 (with discussion at 161-166) and by Brunschwig at 359-361 (with discussion).

counselled at E1.2 to postpone desire for as long as virtue remains out of reach). When, at the end of the passage, Epictetus recommends the use of impulse and its opposite (ὀρμᾶν καὶ ἀφορμᾶν), and specifies that they should be accompanied by reservation, he seems to be suggesting an alternative to desire and aversion that may indeed be directed toward what is not up to us—as long as this is done with a proviso of some kind. E2 testifies, meanwhile, that this recommendation is compatible with value-discrimination in the realm of what is not up to us, explaining that impulses should be formed both μεθ’ ὑπεξαίρεσέως and κατ’ ἀξίαν. From this we may at least conclude that reservation allows an agent to direct her impulses toward things with secondary selective value, while somehow accounting for the fact that the attainment of these things remains outside her control.

The precise form taken by the proviso, or reserve-clause, along with its relation to impulse, the central notion of Stoic moral psychology, has been a major focus of the recent debate concerning reservation. I follow Brad Inwood and Jacques Brunschwig in construing the reservation as a conditional clause added to the proposition that constitutes the impulse, in order to prevent it from coming into conflict with what actually happens, that is, with fate, which Stoics identify with the plan of Zeus. The outline of this view is stated by Inwood, who was the first to highlight the central role of reservation in Stoic ethics, as follows:

An impulse with reservation is one which is directed at a predicate describing an action, like all impulses, but it has an added clause which considerably modifies its nature. Instead of assenting to the proposition ‘it is fitting that I should be healthy’, one assents instead to ‘it is fitting that I should be healthy, unless something comes up to interfere’ or ‘unless it goes against Zeus’ plan’. In this form, the impulse will not contradict the plans of Zeus, nor will it be inconsistent with the set of propositions which describes fate. But in addition to helping us to preserve our consistency with Zeus while acting in the midst of uncertainty, reservation also makes it possible for someone to adapt smoothly to events not in his own power, the unforeseen events of life.¹²

¹² Brad Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism*, Oxford 1985, p. 121

Inwood goes on to explore how, by means of this added clause, the Stoics were able to harness the resources of their propositional logic to show how the sage can act in the midst of uncertainty while still avoiding assent to propositions that could turn out to be false. This account has been adopted by other influential interpreters and has formed the starting-point for later discussions.¹³ Tad Brennan, identifying an ambiguity in what he calls the ‘standard view’ regarding the placement of the *Deo volente* conditional clause within the proposition that constitutes the impulse, and arguing that it cannot meaningfully be construed as a part of impulse however the ambiguity is decided, proposes that reservation must be understood as a belief that is quite separate from the impulse. On his view, the reservation is merely a non-hormetic, future-tensed tautological proposition on the model of ‘I shall eat this food, unless Zeus wills otherwise, i. e. unless I do not eat this food’, to which the agent assents at the same time as to the proposition constituting the impulse. As he puts it, ‘There is no conditional clause in the impulse, and in fact there is no reservation *in* the impulse itself; an impulse with reservation is one thing along with another, not one thing containing another.’¹⁴

Brunschwig, on the other hand, offers reasons to doubt Brennan’s argument, and questions the meaningfulness of adding such a trivial, non-action-guiding qualification to impulse. Of the two possible construals of the qualification of impulse by reservation, he adopts

¹³ A. A. Long & David Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Cambridge 1987, vol. 2, p. 417; Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire*, Princeton 1994, p. 399

¹⁴ Brennan, ‘Reservation in Stoic Ethics’, 167. The ambiguity in question is between the ‘external option’, on which the conditional is placed outside the hormetic proposition (e.g., ‘(It is fitting that: I pass this law), if Zeus does not will otherwise.’) and the ‘internal option’, on which the conditional is contained within the clause governed by the hormetic operator (e.g., ‘It is fitting that: (I pass this law, if Zeus does not will otherwise.)’). While Brunschwig’s defence of a revised ‘external option’ is certainly persuasive, it should be noted that the placement of the conditional (which may have remained underdetermined for the Stoics, as it certainly is in our remaining evidence) has no bearing on the argument of this section. What is important for the purpose of this chapter is that an impulse formed with reservation is extinguished when it is found, in the course of events, to be in conflict with the divine will.

the one Brennan rejects out of hand, on which the reserve-clause is external to the hormetic proposition (*e.g.*, ‘it is fitting that I eat this cake’) and governs it as a whole. His only revision of this view is to interpret the resulting proposition as a biconditional, so that if an obstacle does present itself, then it will follow that the hormetic proposition is falsified, so that the impulse it expresses is extinguished. This yields the following construal of an impulse with reservation:

If and only if no obstacle presents itself, then (it is fitting that I should eat this cake).¹⁵

For the purpose of this study, I accept that this construal of the proviso, or something similar to it, is correct. On such a view, an impulse accompanied by reservation is only active for as long nothing intervenes to prevent its fulfillment; if an obstacle does present itself, the hormetic proposition is falsified and the agent stops directing his impulse toward the predicate that describes the action now rendered impossible. Knowing all along that it is not within his power to determine the action’s possibility, the agent consents to the divine will by a prior commitment to extinguishing his impulse toward an action not consistent with it.

As Brunschwig has observed, the reserve-clause is sufficient to cause a positive desire to be extinguished if an obstacle prevents its fulfilment, but it is not enough to create a new impulse relating to the state of affairs that obtains after the obstacle arises. Importantly for the purpose of this study, he has hence identified reversal, or *περιτροπή*, as the crucial complement of reservation. This notion is joined with reservation in M2, but as Brunschwig successfully argues, is understood quite distinctly from it. It is by this technique that the mind turns an obstacle into an opportunity for continued rational activity, transforming an impediment into an occasion for continued virtuous action: ‘The mind reverses (*περιτρέπει*) and transposes every hindrance to its activity into its objective and what holds up the activity comes to help the

¹⁵ Brunschwig, ‘Sur deux notions de l’éthique stoïcienne,’ 373.

activity and what blocks the path comes to help us on that path.’ (V.20.3) While this is the only use of the word περιτροπή in Marcus’ work, it is enough to allow Brunschwig to establish its defining features, and thereby to identify several other passages where this mechanism is quite clearly at work, namely IV.1, VI.50, VIII.32 and VIII.35 (which does employ the cognate verb ἐπιπεριτρέπει). He describes it (in terms borrowed from Foucault) as a ‘technique de soi’ that allows the agent to turn something bad into something good, moving beyond the acceptance made by possible by reservation to the truly active use of a new virtue.¹⁶

Brennan and Brunschwig, like Inwood as well, position their research on ὑπεξαίρεσις as an entry into a field requiring more exploration, and their exchange is sure to excite further research. Commenting in a review on Brunschwig’s contribution and on his exchange with Brennan concerning reservation, Gretchen Reydam-Schils has observed that neither Brennan nor Brunschwig has addressed the question of why reservation and reversal would hold a particular interest for Seneca, Epictetus, and especially Marcus.¹⁷ Her own answer to this question is evident in several places: it is because of their interest, and Marcus’ interest in particular, in social interaction.¹⁸ While this is surely true, the point can be developed more

¹⁶ Brunschwig, ‘Sur deux notions de l’éthique stoïcienne,’ 375-380

¹⁷ Gretchen Reydam-Schils, Review of G. Romeyer Dherbey, J.-B. Gourinat, *Les Stoïciens*, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2006.08.03. ‘An issue not addressed by Brennan and Brunschwig, however, is why the notions of “reservation” and of “turn-around,” in Brunschwig’s case, would be of such interest to Epictetus, Seneca, and especially Marcus Aurelius.’ I am not sure that this really is an omission on their part, as Brennan appears too cautious to speculate on how we may relate our late evidence to earlier Stoic thought, and Brunschwig does offer some thoughts, which follow Foucault, on the development of this notion in the imperial period.

¹⁸ Gretchen Reydam-Schils, *The Roman Stoics*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2005), p. 28: ‘One could argue that the notion is prominent in these later Stoic authors precisely because they give so much weight to involvement in society.’ Cf. also her chapter, *Social Ethics and Politics* in Marcel van Ackeren (ed.), *A Companion to Marcus Aurelius*, (London, Blackwell 2012), p. 446: ‘It is clear from those later passages [i.e., later in the Stoic tradition], and especially from Marcus Aurelius’ use, that ‘reservation’ has a particularly important role to play in our interactions with others.’

fully.¹⁹ Just what do reservation and reversal contribute, for Marcus, to the understanding of interpersonal activity?

My suggestion, which moves further along the same lines, is that ὑπεξάρσεις and περιτροπή are interesting to Marcus because they help him to conceptualize actions and reactions in the context of interpersonal life. Certainly, the correct response to events matters even outside interpersonal relations, but when events are brought about by the people alongside whom we live, our way of reacting means a great deal for how we interact with those people. Of the four mentions of ὑπεξάρσεις in the notebooks (without including the fragment of Epictetus preserved in XI.37) three occur in contexts that deal explicitly with interpersonal relationships.²⁰ Specifically, M2/V.20, M3/VI.50 and M4/VIII.41 are all concerned with the possibility that others might present obstacles to Marcus' own activity. In these contexts, reservation is what permits the agent to act amid the contingencies, not only of the natural world, but of the social world as well, by qualifying impulse so that it allows for course corrections. It effects what could be termed a 'reactive disposition', leaving Marcus prepared to react properly if his initial impulse should meet with frustration. The complementary role of reversal is to take account of another's actions and to deal appropriately with that person by forming a new rational impulse in accordance with the virtue most relevant to the situation. Thus to act rightly one must act with a readiness to react, and one must react by continuing to act rightly.

¹⁹ It is also worth noting that Chrysippus' evidence regarding reservation (in a fragment preserved by Epictetus at *Diss.* II.6.9-10 = *SVF* 3.191; see discussion at Inwood 120-121), which is the only testament to the use of this notion in the Old Stoa, does not relate to interpersonal activity. Unlike Marcus, who imagines his impulse to action being blocked by the action of others, Chrysippus imagines his impulse to be healthy being blocked a fated illness. Brunschwig (374-375) shows the importance of reversal for this fragment, though in this context it too cannot have the interpersonal significance this idea has for Marcus.

²⁰ This fragment, for its part, also points toward the social importance of reservation, since it tells us that correct impulse are μεθ' ὑπεξαίρέσεως and κοινωνικά.

A crucial indication in this respect is the pairing of impulse (ὁρμή) and disposition (διάθεσις) in M2. If Marcus' disposition, like his impulse, is unhindered because of reservation, it must be made up at least partially of hormetic tendencies to which reservation has been added.²¹ If this is so, then reservation should characterize more than just a single, occurrent impulse, but rather Marcus' impulses on the whole, just as is recorded for the sage in St1. In this light, too, we can understand the contrast Marcus draws between the particular action, which is obstructed, and the impulse, which is not: because the impulse is part of a generally reserved disposition, it contrasts with the particular action in forming a stable character which endures over time and cannot be obstructed in a particular moment.²² In M3, we see Marcus remind himself that his desire (ὄρεξις) was not for the impossible, but precisely for an impulse formed with reservation; it is because his impulse includes reservation that his desire is not frustrated. Moreover, since the object of desire is the good, 'impulse with reservation' must be meant as a description of virtue. It follows that aiming with reservation is a part of acting rightly, and is therefore to be valued even before an obstacle occurs, so that just as a part of acting rightly is

²¹ Thus we may perhaps read ὁρμῆς δὲ καὶ διαθέσεως as a hendiadys for 'hormetic disposition'. If we can assume that Marcus is using these terms in their technical sense (which is uncertain), then the fact that he describes the tendency to form impulses with reservation as a διάθεσις rather than a ἔξις would tell us that this disposition does not admit of degrees. (Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action*, 37) In this, the reserved disposition contrasts with the illnesses (νόσοι, νοσήματα) of the soul, which are ἔξεις that dispose the agent to the passions. (Inwood 128, 163). As virtue is a διάθεσις, not admitting of degrees, this would offer a reason to identify the sound hormetic disposition that is characterized by reservation with virtue. (cf. Inwood 268, n 112; on the ἔξις ὁρμητικὴ in general, Inwood 37-41) See also Graver, *Stoicism and Emotion*, 136.

²² Here, I believe, is the answer to Brennan's contention ('Reservation in Stoic Ethics', 161-167), that the sage's impulses sometimes must be frustrated, since some passages do mention things that befall the sage that are opposed to his designs (St. 1, Seneca, *Ben.* 4.34.4), though he admits that a ready reading of these passages also seems to describe the sage's impulse as immune to frustration. To say that an agent's hormetic disposition is immune to frustration just does not mean that his plan to carry out a given action cannot be frustrated. When this happens, the agent realizes that he was only trying to act rightly—a feature which describes every one of his impulses—and under this description his impulse cannot be frustrated by any turn of events. Because a part of acting rightly is forming impulses rightly, the reserved impulse is itself an object of desire. In fact, Brennan briefly addresses the question of disposition, claiming that 'having a conditional disposition to have impulses is a different thing from having any impulses that are themselves internally conditional' (168); this is certainly true, but the reserved disposition is different yet again, being a non-conditional disposition to have conditional impulses.

the readiness to react rightly, so too that very readiness is important even before the reaction is needed. This being so, Marcus should strive to make reservation a feature of all his impulses, which is to say that he should cultivate a reserved hormetic disposition.

M4 confirms the importance of reservation as a standing feature of our impulses, whether or not they actually meet with frustration, when it presents the converse claim that to form an impulse without employing reservation (ἀνυπεξαίρετως) is a bad thing in itself. After reflecting, with an eye to the *scala naturae*, on hindrances to the peculiar activity of different forms of life, Marcus claims that reserved impulse is inherent in rational activity, which by virtue of reservation cannot be hindered by external forces.²³ M4 is a difficult passage, both textually and interpretively; Dalfen's emendation of the manuscripts' κοινὸν λαμβάνεις to κωλῶν προλαμβάνεις is ingenious, and allows us to make sense of the passage. Marcus constructs a dilemma by observing that whenever his impulse meets with an obstacle, his impulse has been formed either with reservation or without it. When he forms an impulse without reservation, the evil for him as a rational being is already (ἤδη) contained in this mistake (and will be even if no obstacle arises); if, on the other hand, he anticipates the obstacle and it does indeed arise, even then (οὐπω) he has neither been harmed nor hindered. Just as at VI.50 we saw that impulse with reservation is worth desiring in itself, we now see the converse, that unreserved impulse is itself a bad thing.²⁴

Marcus' use of the notion of reservation in these passages gives weight to the suggestion (seen by Brennan as part of the 'standard view' of reservation, but rejected by him) that a person

²³ Cf. *Ench.* 9 (on impediments to the body but not to the *prohairesis*)

²⁴ The use of Empedocles (fr. Inwood 33-34, Diels-Kranz 27-29) at the end of this passage is a creative one, for Empedocles' world-sphere is intrinsically not liable to frustration or disturbance from without. The soul whose beliefs are in harmony with nature becomes equally immune, even within the turbulent world of human activity (perhaps because it can find solitude within itself at any time, as at IV.3.2).

whose impulses are formed with reservation can somehow not be frustrated, which allows that person to avoid the passions.²⁵ After all, M2 explains why Marcus has no need to become angry with others who stand in the way of his actions, and the notions of reservation and reversal help to explain this. (V.20.2) Here it is precisely because of reservation and reversal that care for human beings is compatible with the indifference of their obstructive actions. (V.20.1) We are by now familiar with the claim that anger involves a mistaken appraisal of external things, which causes the person who has made this appraisal to believe he has been harmed when these things are taken away from him, or when he is hindered as he tries to get them. In M4, this very mistake is identified with unreserved impulse, and the group of passages we are considering gives us reason to think that Marcus quite generally identifies unreserved impulse as the cause of emotional upset, which takes the form of anger in situations brought about by another's agency. At VI.41 Marcus, employing the same alternative as in III.11 (below, pp. 21-22), claims that a proper assessment of external things will promote the proper response to unwelcome events, whether they are brought about by the gods or by other human beings:

Ὅτι ἂν τῶν ἀπροαιρέτων ὑποστήσῃσαν τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἢ κακῶν, ἀνάγκη κατὰ τὴν περίπτωσιν τοῦ τοιούτου κακοῦ ἢ τὴν ἀπότευξιν τοῦ τοιούτου ἀγαθοῦ μέμψασθαι σε θεοῖς καὶ ἀνθρώπους δὲ μισῆσαι τοὺς αἰτίους ὄντας ἢ ὑποπτευομένους ἔσεσθαι τῆς ἀποτεύξεως ἢ τῆς περιπτώσεως· καὶ ἀδικοῦμεν δὴ πολλὰ διὰ τὴν πρὸς ταῦτα διαφοράν. (2) ἔαν δὲ μόνα τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἀγαθὰ καὶ κακὰ κρίνωμεν, οὐδεμία αἰτία καταλείπεται οὔτε θεῶ ἐγκαλέσαι οὔτε πρὸς ἄνθρωπον στήναι στάσιν πολεμίου.

(1) If you treat as good or bad any of the things that fall outside your agency, it must follow that, if you meet bad things of that kind and fail to gain good things of that kind, you will blame the gods and hate the people who are responsible for your failure in one respect or another, or who you suspect will be responsible for them. Indeed, we often do wrong because we differentiate things on this basis. (2) But if we determine that only things that are up to us are good or bad, no reason is left to criticize gods or to adopt a hostile attitude towards another human being. (Tr. C. Gill)

²⁵ Brennan, 'Reservation in Stoic Ethics', 171ff.; Inwood argues for this view at *Ethics and Human Action* 165-173. See n11 above.

Anger is quite specifically at issue here, and it is to be avoided because it puts us into the wrong relationship with other people. Marcus writes, in Epictetan terms, of desire for what is up to us, but this actually describes reservation quite precisely, since forming impulse with reservation is exactly what is in our power (M3/VI.50.2). Here we see the same value-dualism as marked the introduction of reservation in E1 and E2, where impulse with reservation is put forward as a way of making moral choices, while avoiding misfortune by removing desire and aversion from what is not up to us.

As Brunschwig has shown, however, the extinction of a frustrated impulse is not the end of the story. Stoic happiness does not merely consist in resignation to the course of events, but in continued rational activity—which is of unconditional, and not merely selective, value—and this is made possible by the reversal of apparently adverse situations. Commenting on M3, he writes: ‘...il est assez clair que le renversement a pour effet de rendre possible un redémarrage de l’activité, sous l’égide d’une “autre vertu”, alors que la réserve permettait seulement de consentir au blocage de l’activité initialement projetée.’ (376) It is a critical feature of reversal that it is tied specifically to the obstacle it transforms: in M3 Marcus speaks of ‘using’ the obstacle to express a new virtue, and elsewhere, we shall see that he describes the new virtue as chosen in relation to the situation newly at hand. By contrast, it is not clear that if one reacts to the obstacle simply by giving up one’s old projects and starting something completely new, one is really doing the work of reversal; it lies rather in dealing with the obstacle and doing so properly, by using it as the occasion for virtuous activity. This will not be possible unless reservation has already been part of the action from the start—which in the case of an agent whose hormetic disposition is characterized by reservation, it is—since the emotion involved in continuing to have the frustrated impulse (which is equivalent to judging one’s present

circumstances to be bad) is incompatible with a well-reasoned reaction to events. Insofar as reservation characterizes the hormetic disposition, it supports the work of reversal by keeping its path clear of recalcitrant impulses that, when frustrated, would cause the agent to resent those he sees as responsible, whether gods or humans beings. When it comes to other people, the best response is a kindly one, and this is just the response that anger would prevent, since the impulse to do good to others would be contradicted by the angry man's impulse to do them harm; in the limit case, in which persuasion has failed and the obstacle takes the form of insurmountable physical resistance (as imagined at VI.50/M3.2), resignation is perhaps the only option, but in other cases, one can use the obstacle in order to show courage, gentleness, truthfulness or another virtue. Reservation is, therefore, a necessary part of the correct response to wrongdoing, as it must set the stage for reversal by clearing away the previous, contrary impulse to allow a new impulse to be formed in its place. It is by acknowledging that events, and similarly the actions of other people, may not conform to our will, and by forming our impulses in a way that takes account of this, that we become able to react to them properly.²⁶ By forming his impulses with reservation, Marcus can act without becoming angry with those whose wrongdoing stands in his way; by employing the technique of reversal, he can continue to act virtuously precisely by reacting to their wrongdoing as he should.

Hadot (214) and Brunschwig (376) have convincingly identified the operation of reversal in M3, in the use of the obstruction to express another virtue. The interpersonal element of this passage is very pronounced: Marcus is reflecting on his own action in the midst of people whose wills diverge from his, and considering both that others may act in a way that is at odds

²⁶ Reydams-Schils: 'While working for the common good, one cannot force other people to do the right thing... and one needs forbearance and patience when encountering people who are falling short. (*Social Ethics and Politics*, in van Akeren's *Companion*, 446)

with his inclinations and that he may have to act in a way that is at odds with theirs. Reservation makes it impossible for others to obstruct his activity, even in limit cases where they use physical force to prevent him from carrying out his plans.²⁷ In the choice of a new virtue, we can see Marcus' mechanism for determining the correct reactions to the obstacles he encounters, and this includes the proper response to people who cause such obstructions. Two other passages, which also seem to speak to the paired operation of reservation and reversal, discuss the choice of an appropriate virtue somewhat more fully than M3, and confirm that this choice is marked by a responsiveness to the particular situation. In III.11, Marcus gives himself instructions for correctly approaching anything that presents itself to him. Hadot returns frequently to the first half of this passage to attest to Marcus' method of giving a thing's physical definition and stripping it bare of conventional ascriptions of value.²⁸ In the second half of the entry, though Marcus does not employ the terminology of reservation and reversal, his recommendations may offer a view of the two processes at work together:

(2) οὐδὲν γὰρ οὕτως μεγαλοφροσύνης ποιητικόν, ὥς τὸ ἐλέγχειν ὁδῶ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ ἕκαστον τῶν τῷ βίῳ ὑποπιπτόντων δύνασθαι καὶ τὸ αἰεὶ οὕτως εἰς αὐτὰ ὁρᾶν, ὥστε συνεπιβάλλειν ὁποῖόν τι τῷ κόσμῳ ὁποῖαν τινὰ τοῦτο χρεῖαν παρεχόμενον τίνα μὲν ἔχει ἀξίαν ὥς πρὸς τὸ ὅλον, τίνα δὲ ὥς πρὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον, πολίτην ὄντα πόλεως τῆς ἀνωτάτης, ἧς αἱ λοιπαὶ πόλεις ὥσπερ οἰκίαι εἰσὶν. (3) τί ἐστὶ καὶ ἐκ τίνων συγκέκριται καὶ πόσον χρόνον πέφυκε παραμένειν τοῦτο τὸ τὴν φαντασίαν μοι νῦν ποιοῦν καὶ τίνος ἀρετῆς πρὸς αὐτὸ χρεῖα, οἷον ἡμερότητας, ἀνδρείας, ἀληθείας, πίστεως, ἀφελείας, αὐταρκειᾶς, τῶν λοιπῶν. (4) διὸ δεῖ ἐφ' ἑκάστου λέγειν· τοῦτο μὲν παρὰ θεοῦ ἢ κεί, τοῦτο δὲ κατὰ τὴν σύλληξιν καὶ τὴν συμμηρομένην σύγκλωσιν καὶ τὴν τοιαύτην σύντευξιν τε καὶ τύχην, τοῦτο δὲ παρὰ τοῦ συμφύλου καὶ συγγενοῦς καὶ κοινωνοῦ, ἀγνοοῦντος μέντοι ὃ τι αὐτῷ κατὰ φύσιν ἐστίν. (5) ἀλλ' ἐγὼ οὐκ ἀγνοῶ· διὰ τοῦτο χρῶμαι αὐτῷ κατὰ τὸν τῆς κοινωνίας φυσικὸν νόμον εὖνως καὶ δικαίως· ἅμα μέντοι τοῦ κατ' ἀξίαν ἐν τοῖς μέσοις συστοχάζομαι.

(2) Nothing is so effective in creating greatness of mind as being able to examine methodically and truthfully everything that presents itself in life, and always viewing

²⁷ This passage is marked by vocabulary drawn from the philosophy of action (ἄκοντας, VI.50.1, βίᾳ, 2), which Marcus is exploring in an interpersonal light. The thematic importance of these terms could explain the curious fact that, given his station, Marcus should even entertain the thought that violent force might stop him from carrying out his activity, since outside the line of battle or an attempt on his person, he could never have encountered forceful resistance without its being in his power to see it overcome.

²⁸ Hadot, *La Citadelle intérieure*, 122, 181, 231. See also Gill introd. xl-xliv.

things in such a way as to consider what kind of function this particular thing contributes to what kind of universe... (3) ... and what virtue is needed to respond to it, such as gentleness, courage, truthfulness, good faith, simplicity, self-sufficiency, and so on. (4) So, in each case, you should say: this has come from god, this from the coordination and interweaving of the threads of fate and similar kinds of coincidence and chance, this from one of my own kind, a relative and companion, but one who does not know what is natural for him. (5) But I do know, and so I treat him kindly and justly according to the natural law of companionship, though aiming at the same time at what he deserves with regard to the things that are morally neutral.²⁹ (Tr. C. Gill)

Here Marcus is thinking of himself at the moment when he must face an object or a situation he might have preferred not to encounter. In considering the object as part of the divine plan, he calls to mind the condition on which reserved impulse is extinguished, namely the truth of ‘Zeus wills otherwise’. Meanwhile, in considering what virtue is required in reacting to the object he effects the work of reversal. This passage is structured around the paired operation of these two processes: in both (2) and (4), Marcus tells himself to consider the object as part of the divine plan, and then turns in (3) and (5) to consider his own role, which is to act appropriately in response. In section (2), Marcus states the general principle that greatness of mind³⁰ is the result of seeing every event as a part of the world’s providential ordering, and in section (3) he turns to the response appropriate to events of different kinds, actually listing several different virtues

²⁹ Intriguingly, the last line of this passage may offer a perspective on Marcus’ philosophy of punishment. The view of Farquharson (ad loc.), on which we should read it as saying that Marcus, like the gods at IX.27.3, should help the ignorant to attain the indifferents that they value, does not account for the context of the passage, where the treatment of wrongdoers in particular is at issue; the indifferents that these people deserve may indeed be things they want to avoid, though they are not in reality bad. I suggest that Marcus has exactly these in mind, and is thinking of his own role in presiding over the trial of wrongdoers. After all, it is clear enough that throughout his reign, Marcus did continue to order punishments of a perfectly conventional sort. His boast of never having had a senator put to death, though setting him apart from the bloodthirsty Domitian and the vindictive Hadrian, still reveals the fact that he sometimes saw the execution, or the violent punishment, of his erring subjects as appropriate. If this is so, then this passage might suggest that he saw punishments, along with rewards, as indifferent things which must nevertheless be distributed properly and without malice; this would not be incompatible with a calm and even kindly temper. An interesting study of Marcus’ judicial activity in comparison with his philosophical output concludes that Marcus’ treatment of criminals was genuinely influenced by his Stoic convictions, though the realities of his position kept him from realizing his high ideals as he might be thought to have wished. (Yvonne Bongert, *Le Mal et sa sanction dans l’oeuvre de Marc-Aurèle*, 270-274).

³⁰ On the Stoic characterization of μεγαλοψυχία or *magnitudo animi*, which responds polemically to Aristotelian ideas, see especially Seneca, *De Ira* 1.20, 3.5, 3.32 and *De Clementia* 1.5.

among which he might choose, as the situation demands. Then, in section (4) he applies the principle to himself by urging a careful assessment of any event, which must come from god, from his plans, or from the companions god has given him; he pays particular attention to the actions of one of his erring human kindred, contrasting that person's ignorance with his own better understanding in a way that clearly recalls II.1. By section (5) the example has narrowed to just this situation, and here Marcus speaks of treating the offender with kindness and justice, the other-directed virtues that are evidently provided by nature for just such a response.

This passage shows that Marcus recommends reservation and reversal even in the face of obstructions caused by other human agents, and perhaps primarily in these cases, as the narrowing of his example suggests. These events must also be seen as part of Zeus' plan, but they are meaningfully distinguished from obstructions caused by animals or the working of natural forces. To the extent that they stand in the way of his activity and require him to accept the course of events, human and non-human forces affect Marcus in exactly the same way, but when it comes to acting in response to the obstacle, the choice of a new virtue offers an occasion to distinguish between human agents and natural events. If, in acting with the guardedness that characterizes the reserved disposition, Marcus has determined to keep his impulses in line with fate, then when he considers another person's obstructive action from the perspective of the cosmic order, this allows him to accept the setback with the same patience as he would direct toward the workings of nature or the doings of non-human animals, when they stand in the way of his activity (cf. M2/V.20). When it comes to choosing a new virtue in reaction to the situation, however, reversal offers a mechanism for reacting in a specifically human way to events caused by other agents. Thus Marcus might choose resignation in the face of an adverse

wind, or courage to meet a lion in his path, but gentleness or truthfulness in response to his wayward fellows.

As Gill has observed, this passage puts a heavy emphasis on social relations; more specifically, it shows Marcus deliberating on a response to the wrongdoing of other people that is consistent with the ‘natural law of companionship’, and using reservation and reversal to work through the problem.³¹ In IX.42, we find an even stronger emphasis on the right way of relating to other human beings, along with a development parallel to that of III.11. It is the first half of this comparatively extended passage that is of interest to us:

(1) Ὅταν τινὸς ἀναισχυντία προσκόπῃς, εὐθὺς πυνθάνου σεαυτοῦ· δύνανται οὖν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἀναισχυντοὶ μὴ εἶναι; οὐ δύνανται· (2) μὴ οὖν ἀπαίτει τὸ ἀδύνατον· εἷς γὰρ καὶ οὗτός ἐστιν ἐκείνων τῶν ἀναισχυντῶν, οὓς ἀνάγκη ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ εἶναι. (3) τὸ δ’ αὐτὸ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ πανούργου καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀπίστου καὶ παντὸς τοῦ ὀτιοῦν ἀμαρτάνοντος ἔστω σοι πρόχειρον. (4) ἅμα γὰρ τῷ ὑπομνησθῆναι ὅτι τὸ γένος τῶν τοιούτων ἀδύνατόν ἐστι μὴ ὑπάρχειν, εὐμενέστερος ἔσῃ πρὸς τοὺς καθ’ ἓνα. (5) εὐχρηστον δὲ κάκεῖνο εὐθὺς ἐννοεῖν, τίνα ἔδωκεν ἡ φύσις τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἀρετὴν πρὸς τοῦτο τὸ ἀμάρτημα· ἔδωκε γὰρ ὡς ἀντιφάρμακον πρὸς μὲν τὸν ἀγνώμονα τὴν πραότητα, πρὸς δὲ ἄλλον ἄλλην τινὰ δύναμιν. (6) ὅλως δὲ ἔξεστὶ σοι μεταδιδάσκειν τὸν πεπλανημένον· πᾶς δὲ ὁ ἀμαρτάνων ἀφάμαρτάνει τοῦ προκειμένου καὶ πεπλάνηται.

(1) Whenever you are shocked by anyone’s wrong behaviour, ask yourself at once, ‘Is it then possible that there should be no bad people in this world?’ It is quite impossible. (2) So you should not demand the impossible: this person is one of those bad people who must necessarily exist in the world. (3) And keep this argument at hand for when you meet a rogue, a traitor, or any other kind of wrongdoer; (4) for as soon as you remind yourself that the class of such persons cannot fail to exist, you will view them more kindly as individuals. (5) It is also helpful to reflect at once on this further point: what virtue has nature granted us to us to meet the wrong in question? For it has granted us gentleness to use against the unfeeling, and in every other case, another such antidote; (6) and generally speaking, it is within your power to show someone who has gone astray the error of his ways (for every wrongdoer is someone who has missed the goal set down for him and thus has gone astray). (tr. R. Hard, lightly modified)

Once again, Marcus imagines himself at the moment in which he is faced with another’s wrongdoing. He tells himself not to desire the impossible; at VI.50.2, this is exactly the desire

³¹ Gill, *Marcus Aurelius*, xiiii

that was contrasted with reserved impulse, and so we may fairly take it that reservation is what Marcus is recommending here. Indeed, in sections (1) to (4), it is the ordering of the universe that is at issue; again Marcus situates the wrongdoing of his fellows in a cosmic context in order to keep himself from becoming angry and frustrated. For Zeus does *not* will that the world should contain no bad people, and attention to what Zeus wills is precisely what characterizes the reserved disposition.³² In section (5), Marcus turns to the positive reaction he expects of himself, appealing to the selection of a new virtue in response to the wrong, which we have identified with the mechanism of reversal. Quite specifically, Marcus reminds himself that the wrongdoer is a rational agent who has gone astray, and that in most cases, he can correct that person by pointing out his mistake. We shall turn shortly to this feature, which is quite specific to interpersonal moral response.

Though reservation and reversal are meaningfully distinct operations, together they make for the complete continuity of Marcus' actions and his reactions to events, so that effectively his activity remains uninterrupted, even when a particular action of his does not meet with success. This is strikingly illustrated by the metaphor of fire in M1/IV.1. Here events become the material (ὕλη) for Marcus' activity, the fuel (ῥύλη) that feeds its flame. Hadot, who has thematized this passage in his discussion of moral activity, has beautifully summarized its intent:

Le paradoxe du feu qui grandit d'autant plus qu'on lui apporte des objets qui pourraient l'étouffer ou du moins lui faire obstacle, c'est le paradoxe de la volonté bonne qui ne se contente pas d'une seule matière d'exercice, mais qui s'assimile tous les objets, les buts les plus divers, en communiquant sa bonté et sa perfection à toutes les actions qu'elle entreprend et à tous les événements auxquelles elle consent. Le feu et la bonne volonté sont donc totalement libres à l'égard des matières qu'ils utilisent;

³² For the wrongdoer as part of the divine plan, cf. VI.42.2, as well as Epictetus 1.12.16; Cleanthes, in his Hymn to Zeus (LS 54I = SVF 1.537), exempts the deeds of wrongdoers from Zeus' plan (l. 17), but in the lines that follow he emphasizes Zeus' ability to make the crooked straight and to love the unloved, which suggests something of the attitude Epictetus and Marcus would adopt.

ces matières leur sont indifférentes, les obstacles qu'on leur oppose ne font que les alimenter.³³

Brunschwig, who cites Hadot's discussion with approval (359, n 8), has clearly identified the pairing of reservation and reversal in the μέν...δέ construction of M1.2: 'Tandis que la clause introduite par μέν se rapporte explicitement à la réserve, celle introduite par δέ peut certainement être versée au compte du renversement: "faire de l'obstacle sa propre matière", c'est bien transformer cet obstacle; de barrage qu'il était, en faire un accès, d'inhibiteur de l'activité qu'il était, en faire un stimulateur de l'activité.' (376) We know from Plutarch that Chrysippus himself spoke of what is according to and contrary to nature as together forming 'the material of virtue.' (Plutarch, Comm. not. 1069e=LS 59A) For Chrysippus, selection among indifferents provides the task of morality and makes the operation of virtue possible; if Marcus has Chrysippus' use of the ὅλη metaphor in mind, this reinforces the conclusion that impulse with reservation is directed toward indifferent things. There is, however, no suggestion in our source that Chrysippus developed this metaphor, or his own thought on reservation, in a specifically interpersonal light.³⁴ For Marcus, virtue is fuelled by events—including the wrongdoing of others, which is an indifferent from his perspective—precisely insofar as these events provide him the occasion for a virtuous response.³⁵

Our analysis, then, yields the following structure of interpersonal activity and reaction, as Marcus understands it. First, Marcus undertakes an action in accordance with right reason,

³³ Hadot, *La Citadelle intérieure*, 214-215 (cf. his heading for this section, 'L'intention morale ou le feu que toute matière alimente' (209))

³⁴ For Chrysippus on reservation, see p.117 n.19.

³⁵ Aristo of Chios also appears to have used fire's way of consuming different materials as an illustration of how the activity of the soul can be fuelled by the use of several different virtues. (LS 61B4.4) Epictetus, without using the metaphor of fire, still describes externals as the ὅλα τῇ προαίρεσει (I.29.2), and emphasizes, like Marcus, that we can put any material to a good use, even though we cannot choose whatever material we like. (I.29.39-40)

which means that he assents to a hormetic proposition qualified by a reserve clause. The reservation is needed in order that, when another person prevents him from carrying out the action he has intended, he will no longer feel the impulse to achieve that action—an impulse whose frustration would cause him to feel pain, as well as resentment toward the person he suspects of causing this misfortune. Instead, when another person stands in the way of that action, and the reserve clause causes the impulse to continue in that action to be extinguished, Marcus, by the operation of reversal, converts the obstacle into material for right action by forming a new impulse to carry out whatever action is required in response. On this understanding of interpersonal activity, then, another's wrong or obstructive action is the material that Marcus must convert into the stuff of his own activity. In such a case as this, the activity required of Marcus is the exercise of a specifically interpersonal virtue. That is, given the fact of someone's having done wrong and so created an impediment to the action at which Marcus was aiming with reservation, it at once becomes incumbent on him to convert that obstacle into an occasion for acting well, precisely by responding mildly to the offender.³⁶

Seen together, the passages that deal with reservation and reversal present a nuanced picture of the wise person's action: the basic notion is still one of action in accordance with right

³⁶ By way of illustration, a famous incident from Marcus' own life is strikingly susceptible to this analysis. Marcus assents to the proposition, 'It is fitting for me to make war on the German tribes and so to expand the borders of the empire, if and only if nothing intervenes to prevent me from doing so.' Then, while in campaign on Germany, Marcus meets with an obstacle in the form of news from Syria that Avidius Cassius has proclaimed himself emperor. As this situation requires urgent attention, it poses an obstacle to Marcus' continued presence on the German front. He might begin with an attempt to persuade Cassius to stand down, perhaps by explaining in a letter that imperial rule is not a good in itself, that the royal purple is only sheep's hair stained with shellfish blood; failing this, he heads to Syria to put down the insurrection, but only because it is the action required of him, and not out of any anger toward Cassius. Intriguingly, Cassius Dio (Epitome of Book 72, sec. 24) attributes to Marcus a speech on this occasion in which he mentions his plan to use the occasion of a meeting with Cassius to exercise forgiveness. In his biography of Marcus, Birley observes: 'As Dio had the opportunity of knowing something of the events of 175 by personal experience and from eye-witness accounts, there may be some echoes in his version of an actual speech by the emperor.' (Birley *Marcus Aurelius: A Biography*. London: Batsford, 1987, rev. ed., 187) Could we know this for a true report of the Emperor's speech, and not Dio's pastiche of philosophical ideas broadly associated with him, it would provide an excellent illustration of reversal put into action.

reason, but the impulses that govern this action are always subject to revision based on the complex setting in which the action must take place. In general, this allows for a great deal of situational sensitivity, as Inwood, Brennan and Brunschwig agree.³⁷ To those working toward virtue, it offers complementary techniques for avoiding frustration while acting in a world where others are likely to cause obstructions by their wrongdoing, and for redirecting one's own action in response to theirs.³⁸ It also shows that Marcus' Stoic ethics permit a great deal of meaningful engagement with other people, even when they go astray; his prescriptions to himself are not written in a social vacuum. Within the Stoic edifice of Marcus' ethical thought, reservation and reversal provide a framework able to support detailed moral reasoning about action in an interpersonal setting by accounting for the contingency such settings entail and offering a mechanism for virtuous interpersonal response.

The mechanism described here takes account of obstructions caused by impersonal forces as well as those caused by other people, and this, indeed, is just what Marcus himself signals when he compares wrongdoers to the sun, the wind, and wild beasts, insofar as it is unreasonable for him to resent them. (V.20) In both cases, an appropriate reaction is continuous

³⁷ Though Brennan, 'Reservation in Stoic Ethics', 175, dissents (needlessly, in my view) from Inwood's account, *Ethics and Human Action*, 111., of how reservation enables the sage's flexibility. Brunschwig's discussion of reversal ('Sur deux notions de l'éthique stoïcienne', 375ff.) has helped to make even clearer how this flexibility might have been understood.

³⁸ In the previous section I have usually assumed that impediments to Marcus' action, when caused by human agents, are to be seen as the result of wrongdoing on their part; that Marcus does the same is clear from M3/6.50.1. (where the obstruction is caused by someone who fails to persuade the others of a different course) and from 3.11.2-5 (where Marcus emphasizes his response to events caused by erring human agents). I take this to be based on the fairly natural understanding that to try, deliberately and without cause, to obstruct another person's right action is to act wrongly, or else on the thought that the right actions of different people will not normally be at odds with each other. Marcus appears to allow, however, for situations in which another person, without acting wrongly, could get in the way of his action. (We might think, for instance, of times when he might be obstructed by Germans who fight bravely to defend their homeland, in contrast to the obstruction caused by Cassius' grasping attempt at revolt.) Something like this, I think, is the situation evoked by his comparison of certain offences to blows sustained in a wrestling match, which we can receive without suspecting our opponent in the game of hostility toward us. (6.20)

with the obstructed action—that is, insofar as one virtuous action merges into another, so that Marcus’ activity is not obstructed—but it requires a redirection of impulse and the exercise of a different virtue. It is at this point that reactions to personal and to impersonal obstructions diverge, since in choosing a new course of action, Marcus must be attentive to the nature of what obstructs him. The possibility of improvement and understanding for humans as rational animals expands the options available for him to act in response, which sets them strongly apart from the sun, the wind and wild beasts. In one entry, we see Marcus distinguish obstacles along these very lines:

Ἐγὼ τὸ ἐμαυτοῦ καθήκον ποιῶ, τὰ ἄλλα με οὐ περισπᾷ· ἦτοι γὰρ ἄψυχα καὶ ἄλογα ἢ πεπλανημένα καὶ τῇ ὁδῶν ἀγνοοῦντα.

For my part, I do what is appropriate for me, and other things do not distract me. They are either lifeless, irrational, or have lost their way and are ignorant of the true path. (VI.22, tr. C. Gill)

In the case of lifeless or irrational things, the only option is resignation and a change of course that might circumvent their effects. When it comes to human beings, however, their rationality provides the opportunity to engage with them and correct their mistakes. Sometimes, indeed, this is impossible, and then too resignation is the only option, but attempts at persuasion must come first. This is what Marcus expresses at VI.50.1-2 (above), and in several other entries:

Οἱ ἄνθρωποι γέγονασιν ἀλλήλων ἕνεκεν· δίδασκε οὖν ἢ φέρε. (VIII.56)

Human beings exist for one another’s sake—so teach them, or tolerate them.

Εἰ μὲν σφάλλεται, διδάσκειν εὐμενῶς καὶ τὸ παρορώμενον δεικνύναι. εἰ δὲ ἀδυνατεῖς, σεαυτὸν αἰτιᾶσθαι ἢ μηδὲ σεαυτόν. (X.4)

If he bungles, teach him kindly, and show him what he saw awry. If you can’t, then blame yourself—or not even yourself.

Since the possibility of persuading another person entails a recognition of that person’s rationality, the attitude Marcus recommends cannot correspond exactly to the Strawsonian objective attitude; on the other hand, it must be quite unlike the reactive attitude of anger, since

such an emotional response would be inconsistent with informed judgements of value, and implicates feelings of hostility that are odds with the proper relationship between one human being and another.

Indeed, Marcus finds the correct attitude to others in the very rationality that makes it possible to correct their moral errors. It is precisely this and nothing else that accounts for the kinship between him and any other person; in our first text, Marcus reminded himself that the wrongdoer is related to him ‘not because he has the same blood or seed, but because he shares in the same mind and portion of divinity.’ (II.1.3) It is because they are rational that they are related to Marcus, and because of this relationship that Marcus must not become angry with them. Ultimately, then, it is because of their rationality that Marcus must treat them kindly. On the other hand, this kindness also depends on Marcus’ own rationality, and not only because it allows him to make informed value judgments of the sort that will forestall anger. It is also because the rationality that Marcus shares with the wrongdoer permits a different way of relating to him that is based on reasoned exchange. A vivid passage speaks to this fact:

(1) Τῷ γράσωνι μήτι ὀργίζῃ, μήτι τῷ ὀζοστόμῳ ὀργίζῃ; τί σοι ποιήσει; τοιοῦτον στόμα ἔχει, τοιαύτας μάλας ἔχει, ἀνάγκη τοιαύτην ἀποφορὰν ἀπὸ τοιούτων γίνεσθαι. (2) ‘ἀλλ’ ὁ ἄνθρωπος λόγον ἔχει,’ φησί, ‘καὶ δύναται συννοεῖν ἐφιστάνων, τί πλημμελεῖ.’ (3) εὖ σοι γένοιτο· τοιγαροῦν καὶ σὺ λόγον ἔχεις, κίνησον λογικῇ διαθέσει λογικὴν διάθεσιν, δεῖξον, ὑπόμνησον. οἱ γὰρ ἐπαῖει, θεραπεύσεις καὶ οὐ χρεία ὀργῆς.

(1) Surely you aren’t angry with someone who smells of stale sweat? Surely you aren’t angry with someone with stale breath? What good will that do? That’s the kind of mouth he has; that’s the kind of armpit he has; and there is a necessary connection between the smells and those factors. (2) ‘But this person possesses rationality, and if he gives it thought he can work out why he is offensive.’ (3) Well done! So you have rationality too. Activate one rational disposition by another: show him, tell him. If he listens, you will cure him and there will be no need for anger. (V.28, tr. C. Gill)

Here Marcus reasons with himself as to why he should not be angry with a person whose smell is bothersome and unpleasant, offering this as a model for his response to other situations. He begins by deploring the uselessness of anger and pleading necessity in defence of the stale-

smeller, but then protests to himself that the offensive person really is not smelling under any kind of necessity, because as a rational being he can figure out that he ought to go clean himself up. In this moment of interior dialogue, Marcus attempts to justify his anger by pointing to the other person's rationality (which would distinguish his objectionable condition from that of an animal, for instance, by making it 'up to him'), but then responds by reminding himself that this is precisely why he can take a better course, which is to talk to the other person about the matter, since the two of them share in the same reason.³⁹ In 'activating one rational disposition by another', Marcus engages with the other person in a specifically human way. Of course, this principle is meant to have a much broader application; whatever the nuisance caused by another person, our shared rationality offers the opportunity for correction. (Cf. VI.23.1: 'In the case of irrational animals and objects and things in general, treat them with generosity of spirit and freedom of mind, since you have rationality and they do not. In the case of human beings, since they have rationality too, treat them in a sociable way too.') The other person's rationality does indeed mean that he has the opportunity to improve, but far from offering a reason for anger, this fact presents an opportunity for Marcus to exercise his own rational nature by engaging with the other in a rational way.

In this recognition of the wrongdoer as another rational agent in need of correction, and as one with whom it is possible to engage but whom it is impossible to control, we can recognize the strong influence of Marcus' reading of Epictetus. In a previous chapter, I sought to show the importance of interpersonal moral response in the philosophy of Epictetus by

³⁹ In *Diss.* 4.11, we actually see Epictetus correcting a student who, thanks to his crude idea of the philosophical life, has refused to take a bath. Even here Epictetus appeals to Socrates as his model (4.11.19), and claims that even those who deny the sociable nature of human beings must admit their natural desire to be clean. (4.11.1.)

highlighting the fact that a wrong action is ‘up to’ the wrongdoer, in Epictetus’ sense, which is the reason why such an action is bad for this person and for no other; this in turn is the reason why that action is done unwillingly, in the sense required by the Socratic Paradox. This, I claimed, entails the recognition of the wrongdoer as someone whose rationality is just as independent of one’s own as one’s own is independent of his, as well as a sympathetic or charitable view of the suffering he brings on himself. That Marcus read Epictetus deeply is not in need of demonstration: the strongest thesis, namely Hadot’s claim that Marcus acquired his philosophy from Epictetus wholesale, has seldom won acceptance, but the pervasive presence of Epictetus’ thought in Marcus’ notebooks is widely acknowledged and indeed beyond doubt.⁴⁰ Here I wish to emphasize the importance of this influence on Marcus primarily as a vehicle for Socratic ideas in his thought. This runs along two lines, namely Marcus’ reception of the Socratic Paradox and his thematization of the claim that the harm involved in a wrong action is done to the wrongdoer alone, the legacy of the Socratic claim that no one can harm a good man.

Marcus’ closest quotation of the Socratic Paradox is quite clearly mediated by Epictetus, as he cites it in the form in which he found it in the *Discourses*: ‘So when someone assents to a falsehood, know that he did not want to assent to something false—for every soul is unwillingly deprived of truth, as Plato says—rather, the falsehood seemed true to him.’ (*Diss.* 1.28.4)⁴¹ In Marcus we find the following:

(1) “Πᾶσα ψυχή, φησὶν, ἄκουσα στέρεται ἀληθείας.” οὕτως οὖν καὶ δικαιοσύνης καὶ σωφροσύνης καὶ εὐμενείας καὶ παντὸς τοῦ τοιούτου. (2) ἀναγκαιότατον δὲ τὸ διηγεκῶς τούτου μεμνησθαι· ἔση γὰρ πρὸς πάντας πραότερος.

‘Every soul,’ he says, ‘is unwillingly deprived of truth’; in the same way too, then, of justice and self-control and kindness and everything of this sort. It is most necessary to keep this constantly in mind, for you will be gentler toward everyone. (VII.63)

⁴⁰ See Hadot, *The Inner Citadel*, 59-70. For discussion of Hadot’s view, see van Ackeren, *Die Philosophie Marc Aurels* (Berlin: De Gruyter), 19 and Gill, *Marcus Aurelius*, xxix-xxx.

⁴¹ On the source of the quotation, see above, p.95 n.41.

We saw that for Epictetus, the Socratic Paradox is not meant to deny that a wrong act is a free act, but rather to promote the kind of response to wrongdoing that takes full account of the wrongdoer's bad condition. In this passage, Marcus makes it quite clear that the Socratic Paradox is a therapeutic tool for him as well, recording that the reason he must keep it in mind continuously is that it will improve his response to everyone else when they do wrong. He expands on the Socratic material he has received from Epictetus by drawing the inference that, if no one is willingly deprived of the truth, and (we must assume) one who does know the truth will be kind, self-controlled and just, all these virtues will necessarily be present in someone who knows the truth, and that someone who fails to be kind, self-controlled or just must be operating under want of something he could never have chosen to do without. This point has a double function, as it reminds Marcus to expect justice and kindness of himself precisely while he exhibits patience with the failings of others. We cannot, of course, imagine that Epictetus would do anything but endorse this exhortation, but Marcus' emphasis makes it clearer than ever that he connects the Socratic Paradox with expectations for interpersonal behaviour. Strikingly, he places kindness (εὐμένεια) beside the foundational virtues of justice and self-control—kindness which is, for Marcus, primarily a feature of the right response to the wrongdoing of others.⁴² His reading, which is mediated both by the influence of Epictetus and by his own concerns, sets the claim that no one does wrong willingly in a distinctly interpersonal light.

⁴² At IX.11.1, kindness is what nature has given Marcus to use toward those whose minds he cannot turn away from wrong; at XI.9.1, it is what those in his way cannot prevent him from exercising toward them; at I.9, it is modelled by Sextus, who is also praised for never showing anger; at VI.20.1 Marcus contrasts 'kind avoidance' with enmity toward someone who has injured him; at VI.47.6, kindness is coupled with truth and justice as qualities which, when exercised toward wrongdoers, are the only things of value in a world of dying generations; at VIII.43.6, one should exercise kindness even when compelled to suicide; and so on at X.4.1, 36.6, XI.13.2, 18.15-16 and elsewhere.

For Marcus, not only does reflection on the Socratic Paradox promote kindness, but not to reflect on the understanding of good on which another is acting is to show a cruel indifference to his or her pursuit of the good. At VI.27, where we see an elaboration of the thought behind the use of the Socratic Paradox as therapy, Marcus emphasizes that other agents, even when they go wrong, are simply trying by their best lights to pursue what is beneficial:

(2) Πῶς ὥμῳ ἐστὶ μὴ ἐπιτρέπειν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ὁρμᾶν ἐπὶ τὰ φαινόμενα αὐτοῖς οἰκεῖα καὶ συμφέροντα · καίτοι τρόπον τινὰ οὐ συγχωρεῖς αὐτοῖς τοῦτο ποιεῖν, ὅταν ἀγανακτῇς, ὅτι ἀμαρτάνουσι. (2) φέρονται γὰρ πάντως ὡς ἐπὶ οἰκεῖα καὶ συμφέροντα αὐτοῖς. (3) —ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἔχει οὕτως.—οὐκοῦν δίδασκε καὶ δείκνυε μὴ ἀγανακτῶν.

How cruel it is not to permit people to aim at what appears to them to be suitable and beneficial to themselves. But in a way you are not allowing them to do this whenever you are indignant at the fact that they are doing wrong. Surely, indeed, they are drawn towards what is suitable and beneficial to themselves. ‘But it is not so.’ Well then teach them and show them—do not be indignant. (VI.27, tr. C. Gill)

Here again Marcus acknowledges the other as an agent who aims at what is best for her.⁴³

Calling it cruel to do so, he forbids himself to stand in the way of another’s pursuit of what seems best; instead, he reminds himself that he ought to correct her false perceptions, which actually helps her to pursue the good, but with better understanding.⁴⁴ Correction, after all, is just what Marcus would want for himself, since as a good Socratic he recognizes, at VI.21, that it is far better to be corrected when one is thinking or doing wrong. (*Gorg.* 458e) This willingness to help the wrongdoer by correcting her is in contrast to indignation at her wrongdoing, which does not promote, or perhaps even opposes, the kind of cooperative action involved in teaching someone to do better. In another passage, Marcus goes further still by

⁴³ Cf. Epictetus I.28.7-8 (of Medea): ‘It is because the very gratification of her passion and the taking of vengeance on her husband she regards as more profitable than the saving of her children. “Yes, but she is deceived.” Show her clearly that she is deceived, and she will not do it; but so long as you do not show it, what else has she to do but that which appears to her to be true?’ (Tr. Oldfather)

⁴⁴ Cf. the thought at IX.11, where Marcus prescribes kindness even when correction has failed; this kindness, which the gods also exhibit toward human beings, actually takes the form of helping them acquire some of the things they take to be good.

exhorting himself to imagine the conception of value that another has in mind when that person does him wrong, and to compare it to his own conception:

(1) Ὅταν τις ἀμάρτη τι εἰς σέ, εὐθὺς ἐνθυμοῦ τί ἀγαθὸν ἢ κακὸν ὑπολαβὼν ἤμαρτε· τοῦτο γὰρ ἰδὼν ἐλεήσεις αὐτὸν καὶ οὔτε θαυμάσεις οὔτε ὀργισθήσῃ. (2) ἤτοι γὰρ καὶ αὐτὸς τὸ αὐτὸ ἐκείνῳ ἀγαθὸν ἔτι ὑπολαμβάνεις ἢ ἄλλο ὁμοειδές· δεῖ οὖν συγγινώσκειν. (3) εἰ δὲ μηκέτι ὑπολαμβάνεις τὰ τοιαῦτα ἀγαθὰ καὶ κακά, ῥᾶον εὐμενὴς ἔσῃ τῷ παρορῶντι.

(1) Whenever someone does something wrong to you, consider what he took to be good or bad when he did wrong. For then you will pity him and you will not be surprised or become angry. (2) Or perhaps you still take for good the same thing as he does, or something of the same sort: in that case you must excuse him. (3) But if you no longer take such things to be good or bad, you will more easily be kind to one who sees awry. (VII.26)

Either Marcus values the same things as the wrongdoer or he does not, and in either case he has a reason not to become angry: if he has already reached a point in his philosophical training (this I take to be the progression implied by the adverbs ‘still’ and ‘no longer’) where his values are better than the wrongdoer’s, he is in a position to show pity (as Epictetus qualifiedly recommends at *Diss.* 1.28.9) and more importantly kindness, because he now realizes the wrongdoer’s bad condition and because he no longer places such value on that in respect of which he has been injured that he becomes angry at the offence. On the other hand, if his values are the same as the wrongdoer’s, then he has two reasons not to become angry: for one thing, his belief would force him to concede that the other person is acting reasonably when he injures Marcus to obtain the object they both value, which is just what Epictetus has to say to a man who values his fine clothes just as much as the neighbour who would steal them off the line (*Diss.* I.18.14). Moreover, as Epictetus also makes clear, a person who holds the same view of value as the wrongdoer is no better than that person, which means that he is no position to be indignant toward failings he shares: ‘But how is it that you have been so suddenly converted to wisdom that you are angry at fools?’ (*Diss.* I.18.11, tr. Oldfather). And just as Epictetus does in

Diss. 1.18 and 1.28, here Marcus makes it clear that the purpose of such reflections is to improve his own response to what someone else has done.

Finally, a passage with explicitly Socratic colouring and strong Epictetan undertones suggests that the Socratic model may have meant much the same to Marcus as it did to Epictetus. This passage speaks to the cooperation of rational souls in a healthy condition, emphasizing that this is at odds with hostility and conflict:

Ὁ Σωκράτης ἔλεγεν· τί θέλετε; λογικῶν ψυχὰς ἔχειν ἢ ἀλόγων;—λογικῶν.—τίνων λογικῶν; ὑγιῶν ἢ φαύλων;—ὑγιῶν.—τί οὖν οὐ ζητεῖτε;—ὅτι ἔχομεν.—τί οὖν μάχεσθε καὶ διαφέρεσθε;

Socrates said: ‘What do you want—to have the souls of rational or of irrational beings?’ ‘Of rational beings.’ ‘Which rational beings—healthy or corrupt?’ ‘Healthy ones.’ ‘Then why aren’t you looking for them?’ ‘Because we have them.’ ‘Then why are you fighting and quarrelling?’ (XI.39)

Like *Diss.* IV.5.1-4, which may not have been far from Marcus’ mind when he recorded this entry, this passage sees Socrates stopping, or trying to stop, fights between other people by reminding them that conflict with others is alien to the rational soul.⁴⁵ In our discussion of Epictetus, we saw that the Socratic model works in several ways to prevent hostility and conflict, which we cast in terms of Epictetus’ reception of the core Socratic beliefs that a good man cannot be harmed, that no one is willingly ignorant, and that a mind can only be changed by argument. What is more, the same model promotes patient engagement with others, and aims to help them by correcting their mistakes. As this chapter has argued, this is just what the paired techniques of reservation and reversal accomplish for Marcus Aurelius.

In fact, the very idea of reservation (attested, as we have seen, in Epictetus, though less prominently than in Marcus) may itself be part of the Stoics’ Socratic heritage, and build on the

⁴⁵ The Epictetan resonance in 11.39 is strong enough that J. H. Leopold, at least, considered it a fragment of Epictetus. (Dalfen) This seems plausible, but is ultimately uncertain. In any case, its presence in the notebooks shows Marcus’ interest in Socrates as a figure who puts an end to quarrelling.

Socratic model. When we form impulses with reservation, we effectively subject our beliefs about what should be pursued to the scrutiny imposed by events, and prepare ourselves to revise them if they should be proven wrong. Reversal, too, is akin to the Socratic profession (*Gorg.* 458a) that there is nothing more beneficial than to have one's opinions changed, which Marcus echoes at VI.21:

Εἴ τις με ἐλέγξει καὶ παραστήσῃ μοι, ὅτι οὐκ ὀρθῶς ὑπολαμβάνω ἢ πράσσω, δύναται, χαίρων μεταθήσομαι. ζητῶ γὰρ τὴν ἀλήθειαν, ὑφ' ἧς οὐδεὶς πώποτε ἐβλάβη, βλάπτεται δὲ ὁ ἐπιμένων ἐπὶ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ἀπάτης καὶ ἀγνοίας.

If someone can prove me wrong and show me that I am not thinking rightly or acting rightly, then I shall happily change my position. For I am seeking the truth, by which no one has ever been harmed. The one who is harmed is the one who stands by his own folly and ignorance.

This profoundly Socratic passage bears some resemblance to the passages in which Marcus discusses reservation. There is, for one thing, is a verbal similarity between this passage and IV.1, where reservation is the reason why the commanding-faculty in its natural state is in a position to adapt easily to events (πρὸς τὸ διδόμενον μετατίθεσθαι ῥαδίως). This is in contrast to the mind that is wedded to a specific material, a mistake much like that made by the person in this passage who remains attached to his wrong beliefs. Similarly, at VIII.41.8 Marcus describes unreserved impulse as an evil to rational nature, whereas reserved impulse avoids this or any other harm; likewise this passage describes persistence in wrong belief as harmful, but emphasizes that the truth is never a source of harm. Moreover, this passage sets up an exact parallel between the correction of one's beliefs and the correction of one's course of action, suggesting that Marcus' model for the correction of courses of action, which we know to be based on reservation, is tied to his model for the correction of belief, which, as it is expressed in this passage, has unmistakably Socratic precedents. Reservation is thus analogous to the openness to refutation that characterizes beliefs held in a Socratic way, while as a parallel for

reversal, we can look to the gladness Socrates or Marcus would feel at having their beliefs improved, which turns the refutation of their beliefs into an occasion to make progress toward understanding. I have been arguing that, for Marcus, the guardedness entailed by reservation plays an important role in averting hostility toward others; for Socrates, it is a guardedness in belief that makes him willing to change his conclusions whenever he meets with a better argument, along with his patient willingness to correct mistakes, that keeps him out of conflict. In this, we may have evidence that the Socratic attitude is indeed the inspiration for the interpersonal attitude that Marcus adopts.

Conclusion

This dissertation has considered the philosophical problem of moral responsibility as it is treated by Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius—that is, as a problem of the appropriate response to the wrongdoing of others. Rather than asking only the impersonal question of what makes a person responsible for an act of wrongdoing, we have read these authors as asking the interpersonal question of how another person should respond to such an act. I take this approach to be reflected in the intense interest all three authors show in the therapy of anger and the cultivation of proper interpersonal dispositions. In their insistence on this aspect of moral judgement, the Stoics of the Imperial period offer an important contribution that is noticeably more nuanced than those of their philosophical predecessors, even in the Stoa itself. I hope, moreover, that this study has illuminated the implications that the moral evaluation of other people and their actions might have for the character of the agent who effects the judgement; after all, it is natural that our ways of responding to other people's actions should be a reflection of our own character.

The first chapter set the dialectical background for our study of later Stoicism by describing two related features of Aristotelian thought to which Stoics of the Imperial period react. The first of these is the importance of anger in the virtuous person's response to wrongdoing, as evinced by Aristotle's treatment of the virtue of mildness at NE IV.5; the second is the role that this retributive emotion plays in the account of rectificatory justice that Aristotle gives in EE IV / NE V. Looking to the evidence for Theophrastus and for other Peripatetics, this chapter established the genuinely Aristotelian character of the views that the Stoics sought to counter, and so laid the philosophical and historical groundwork for my account of how Stoics defend their own rejection of anger against the challenge posed by the ancient Peripatos. The

Peripatetics took the popular position that sometimes the wrongdoing of others calls for an angry response. We have seen that their defence of anger amounted less to a positive justification of anger than to the insistence that, if in certain circumstances we do not become angry, something vital will be missing from our response. This left Stoics with the task of showing that non-angry responses can indeed do justice to the wrongdoing of others, and it has been a goal of this project has been to show that the Stoics of the Imperial period succeeded in articulating a framework of interpersonal moral response that makes this idea persuasive.

The account of later Stoic responses to wrongdoing began with an argument that interpersonal attitudes are essential to Seneca's answer to the Peripatetic defence of anger. By distinguishing sharply between the determination of guilt and the determination of the right response to the wrongdoer, Seneca shows, against the Peripatetic view, that it is fully possible to respond adequately to the wrongdoing of others without becoming angry. This does not amount to the condonation of wrongdoing (a worry expressed both by Aristotle himself and by contemporary thinkers). For Seneca, many conventional responses, including punishment and certain kinds of revenge, are morally justified, but with the important difference that they must be guided by more rational motives than the return of harm for harm. We saw that Seneca's rejection of the Aristotelian model of retribution leads him to endorse an alternative model of the response to wrongdoing, Socratic in its inspiration, which is based on the correction of the offender. To advance this model, Seneca focusses on the kind of character that is suited to the administration of justice, one that is not only free from anger, but also marked by positive, other-oriented dispositions.

The next chapter showed how Epictetus extended the Stoic model of interpersonal response with his comparison of philosophy to an art of living, and external events—including,

in particular, the actions of others—to the materials of that art. Though the materials are not up to us, our use of them is, and by focussing on this, Epictetus gives his ethics an essentially participatory, reactive character. The Stoics' use of the Socratic model, in evidence for all three authors considered in this thesis, is particularly prominent in Epictetus, who attributes Socrates' patience with others to his insistence on the independence of each person's own mind; this interpretation reflects Socrates' confidence, indeed on display in Plato's dialogues, that no one can change his mind by sheer insistence or by majority rule. His analysis of wrongdoing is in terms of the Socratic Paradox, which he offers as a reason for suspending anger against wrongdoers; it is not meant to show that a wrongdoer's action is involuntary, but only that punishment for the action lies in the deed itself. For Epictetus, the actions of others are not in our power, but our reactions are, and what we ought to value is the fact of acting and reacting rightly in our dealings with them.

The fourth and final chapter studied Marcus Aurelius, for whom the correct response to wrongdoing is a continual preoccupation. In this chapter, we saw how Marcus uses the Stoic concepts of reservation (ὑπεξαίρεσις) and reversal (περιτροπή) to construct a framework of action and reaction. Emphasizing the importance of affection toward human beings, even when they go astray, Marcus calls on himself to correct the mistakes of those who go wrong; in acknowledging the possibility of correction, he also acknowledges the wrongdoer's agency, while in promoting an affectionate response, he makes clear that a dispassionate reaction to wrongdoing is compatible with meaningful human relationships and a strong sense of fellow-feeling. In this, Marcus' account, like those of Seneca and Epictetus, shows due regard to the rationality and responsibility of the erring agent, and shows how this can be done without anger.

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