

Binghamton University
The Open Repository @ Binghamton (The ORB)

The Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy Newsletter


4-22-2004

Stoics on the Differentiation of Character

Margarete Graver

Dartmouth College, Margaret.R.Graver@dartmouth.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://orb.binghamton.edu/sagp>

 Part of the [Ancient History, Greek and Roman through Late Antiquity Commons](#), [Ancient Philosophy Commons](#), and the [History of Philosophy Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Graver, Margarete, "Stoics on the Differentiation of Character" (2004). *The Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy Newsletter*. 333.
<https://orb.binghamton.edu/sagp/333>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by The Open Repository @ Binghamton (The ORB). It has been accepted for inclusion in The Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy Newsletter by an authorized administrator of The Open Repository @ Binghamton (The ORB). For more information, please contact ORB@binghamton.edu.

STOICS ON THE DIFFERENTIATION OF CHARACTER

Margaret Graver, *Dartmouth*

In speaking of the differentiation of character I mean to flag a familiar notion that is basic to just about any theory of character or personality. This is that we come to know essential characteristics of persons especially when we recognize and understand the ways in which individuals are disposed to perform certain action-types and/or to experience certain affect-types. Such dispositions are assumed by common intuition to vary from individual to individual, but to be more or less stable within individuals, so that they become a useful explanatory device. Consider Hera and Athena, in *Iliad* 4.¹ Both have labored for years to bring about the destruction of Troy; yet now, when Zeus threatens on a whim to give over the project, it is only Hera who bursts into a torrent of angry words. The difference of response is explained by appeal to a difference of character; more specifically, it is explained by appeal to some particular trait of character. One does not only want to say that Hera becomes angry on many occasions, but that she is irascible, that there is some more or less stable thing in her or about her that makes her more prone to angry responses than is Athena; conversely, one might say that Athena possesses some more or less stable quality of steadiness or prudence which Hera lacks. In theory, given sufficient means of observation, one could describe a profile of the entire assemblage of traits possessed in any degree by one individual; in so doing, one would have given an account of that person's character or personality.²

Character in this sense bears the entire weight of moral responsibility in the Stoic compatibilist system: the principal cause why a cylinder rolls when pushed is the roundness of that cylinder, and the principal cause for my tendency to moral error is something about me, my own condition of vice.³ But Stoics are not usually given credit for any very subtle account of how character can vary from one individual to the next. Always primary in Stoic ethics is the distinction between virtuous and non-virtuous characters, and this distinction is not one that admits of shades of gray: one is either altogether virtuous or altogether vicious. Not even the specific virtues and vices like justice or cowardice can be packaged together in such ways as to give recognizable profiles to individuals. For the specific virtues are just different manifestations of the one condition which is virtue, and the specific vices are just the absence of these. As long as Achilles is not the Stoic sage he is, technically, a coward; Aristides "the Just" is technically unjust.⁴ There seems to be little room here for a theory of personality: the world is populated by only two sorts of people, with one sort being extremely scarce and the rest of us all sharing the same depressing list of faults.

I will show, however, that Stoic writers were perfectly capable of distinguishing among character-types also according to secondary differentia that can be exhibited independently of one another and in greater or lesser degree. Just as one may observe variations in the sea floor without disregarding the fact that all of it is equally underwater, so Stoic theory defines traits of character which differentiate one individual from another even where all concerned have the same overall moral standing. Such secondary characteristics are identified even among the virtuous; more numerous, however, and also more philosophically interesting, are the character traits of the non-virtuous—that is to say, of ordinary flawed individuals. For it is these that we have to deal with in ourselves and others we know.

¹ The example is one favored by Chrysippus; see Galen, *PHP* 3.2-3.

² A contemporary account of character which is interestingly similar to the Stoic approach can be found in Jacobs 2001.

³ The Chrysippian analogy; see Cicero, *On Fate* 41; Aulus Gellius *NA* 7.2.6-7.

⁴ Technically so, although Seneca insists on behalf of the Stoics that not all the vices are equally prominent in each individual; *On Benefits* 4.27.

In looking at these traits of character I am especially interested in two questions. First, there is a question about how traits work as causes of emotion and of actions generally. Surviving reports make it clear that at least some traits—those called *nosēmata*, “sicknesses,” and *ar-rōstēmata*, “infirmities”—are defined as erroneous beliefs about the value of certain objects. It is not difficult to show that where these traits are concerned, the work of the trait in determining action and feeling is a matter of the logical operation of the corresponding proposition in the agent’s practical reasoning. For another group of traits, called “proclivities,” the evidence is less clear; I hope to show, however, that an analogous interpretation in terms of belief is plausible for these as well. This is not to deny that proclivities such as irascibility may also have a material basis, say in one’s body type or mix of constitutive humors; indeed, we should expect that every trait of character will be describable in material as well as intentionalist terms. But it is as beliefs, i.e. as corresponding to particular premises in the practical syllogism, that traits exercise their determinative capacity.

Scalar conditions of mind

I will assume for the moment that a mind is to be thought of strictly in intentional terms, as a collection of beliefs. The ways a mind can be qualified are the ways a belief-set can be qualified; that is, by the presence or absence of particular beliefs or by the relations that obtain among beliefs in the set. One such qualification is in terms of coherence: all the propositions believed might be systematized into a logically coherent set.⁵ Coherence in belief is a centrally important notion in Stoic moral psychology: it is what guarantees the infallibility and impassivity of the wise, and what distinguishes the cognitions, actions, and affects of the wise as goods where the corresponding items in ordinary persons count technically as evils. But if what one wants is an account of the differences between one wise or foolish person and the next, then coherence is not a standard one can usefully apply. For coherence is, like pregnancy, not a matter of degree: one is either in that state or not; there are no intermediate possibilities. It is, then, a *non-scalar* condition. Our sources like to remark at this point that every bent stick, no matter how it is bent, is equally not straight—and, likewise, that everyone who is anywhere below the surface of the sea is equally without air; or that a puppy is just as blind the day before it opens its eyes as it was at birth.⁶ This is just to say that there are some conditions that cannot be approximated: to fall short of virtue at all is to fall altogether short of it.

But to recognize what is absolute and invariable about straightness is not to say that all straight sticks are identical. The same stick that either does or does not exhibit the entire property of straightness may also exhibit varying degrees of some other property such as length or hardness: it may have scalar properties in addition to the one non-scalar property. A helpful passage in Simplicius gives the Stoic terminology for distinguishing these two kinds of qualifications.

They [the Stoics] say that *hexeis* can be tightened and relaxed, but *diatheseis* cannot. This is why the straightness of the stick also is called by them a *diathesis*, even though it can easily be changed, since the stick can be bent. For the straightness cannot be relaxed or tightened, nor can there be more or less of it, and that is exactly why it is a *diathesis*. It is in this way that the virtues are *diatheseis*, not because of their stability but because they cannot be tightened and do not admit of increase. But the skills (*technai*) are not *diatheseis*, even though they are not easily altered.⁷

⁵ I am not saying anything here about what standard of coherence was thought to apply; this issue may or may not have been worked out in the early Stoa. That coherence in belief was an essential requirement for knowledge or wisdom is amply attested; see for instance the definitions of knowledge recorded by Seneca, *Ecl.* 2.7.51, 73-16-74.3W = *SVF* 3.112.

⁶ Cicero, *On Ends* 3.48; Plutarch, *On Common Notions* 1063ab.

⁷ Simplicius, *On Aristotle’s Categories*. 237.25-238.20.

Simplicius is seeking to clarify an important point about the usage of texts on Stoic ethics, where virtue and vice, and the specific virtues and vices, are regularly classed as *diatheseis*. Because a virtue is typically a stable condition, so that once attained it cannot normally be lost, it is easy for readers to assume that it is because of this stability that virtue is called a *diatheseis*. But this is a misconception. The characteristic feature of a *diathesis* is not stability: there are some stable conditions that are not called *diatheseis*, and some *diatheseis* that are not stable—for if the vices could not be lost, then no one could ever become virtuous. Rather, a condition is called a *diathesis* when it cannot be “tightened and relaxed”; that is, when it is non-scalar. Other conditions which do admit of increase or decrease are called *hexeis*.

To avoid confusion, one should note that the word *hexis* has two different but related uses in Stoicism: it can refer, as in Simplicius, to conditions which are not *diatheseis*—that is, to scalar conditions—but it is also the usual term for the genus to which both *hexeis* and *diatheseis* belong. That is to say, a condition of any kind can also be called a *hexis*. The usage follows a typical Stoic pattern in which a genus—say, the genus of all A things—is divided into two species, B things and, again, A things; that is to say, A things which are also B and A things which are not B, merely-A things.⁸ So, in the Stobaeus passage treated below, goods and evils of the mind are divided into conditions and movements, but the class of conditions is further divided into *diatheseis* and conditions which are not *diatheseis*, what might be called “mere conditions.” [See Figure 1]. For clarity in what follows, I will sometimes add the word “mere” or “scalar” to the general term “conditions,” when it is clear that the writer is making a distinction between *diatheseis* and the more specific use of *hexis*. Following Simplicius, I refer to *diatheseis* as “non-scalar conditions.”

The report in Stobaeus explains in more detail how the distinction between scalar and non-scalar conditions is applied in ethics. In the schematic manner typical of this text, the Stoic author sets forth examples of three classes within the broader class “goods having to do with the mind,” then of the same three classes among the corresponding evils.

Some of the goods having to do with the mind are non-scalar conditions, some are [mere] conditions, and some are not conditions at all. All the virtues are non-scalar conditions, but the specialties (*epitēdeumata*), like prophecy and so forth, are [mere] conditions, while activities in accordance with virtue, like a prudent action, an exercise of self-control, and so on, are not conditions at all.

Likewise, some of the bad things having to do with the mind are non-scalar conditions, some are [mere] conditions, and some are not conditions at all. All the vices are non-scalar conditions, but proclivities, like enviousness, tendency to grief, and so on, are [mere] conditions, as also are the sicknesses and infirmities. Activities in accordance with vice, like an imprudent action, an unjust action and so on, are not conditions at all.⁹

Here are a number of conditions of mind which count as scalar conditions: on the good side “specialties,” and on the bad side “proclivities,” “sicknesses,” and “infirmities.” The items on this list, I contend, are our best candidates in Stoicism for bona fide traits of character: they are relatively stable facts about a person that help to explain her feelings and behavior, and they are also variable from one individual to the next: they can be present in one person and not present, or only very little present, in another.¹⁰ As they are scalar conditions, they cannot be defined in terms of coherence or non-coherence in the belief-set; they must consist in some other qualifications of

⁸ The usage is explained in Long 1983.

⁹ Stobaeus, *Ecl.*, 2.7.5f, 70.21-71.14 Wachsmuth (= *SVF* 3.104).

¹⁰ It may be that there are other mere *hexeis* as well: the lists in Stobaeus typically give only representatives of a class. Other possibilities include the lesser or mere faults mentioned in Cicero, *Tusc.* 4.29-30, and also perhaps the non-intellectual vices in Stob., *Ecl.* 2.7.5b, 59.2-3 Wachsmuth; the latter are analogous to the non-intellectual virtues in *Ecl.* 2.7.5b4, 62.17-20 Wachsmuth; Diogenes Laertius 7.90-91; Cic. *Tusc.* 4.30.

minds. Let us therefore consider each of these items in turn, beginning with the “specialties” of the wise person. For our understanding of character in the ordinary person will be more secure if we see that there is significant character variation even among the wise.

Scalar conditions in the wise

The account in Stobaeus gives us a number of examples of “specialties,” along with a kind of definition.

Fondness for music (*philomousia*), fondness for literature (*philogrammatia*), fondness for horses (*philippia*), fondness for hunting with dogs (*philokunēgia*), and, in general, the things that are said to be encyclical skills are called by Stoics “specialties” but are not said to be forms of knowledge; rather, they are classed among the worthwhile *hexeis*. Accordingly, they say that only the wise person is fond of music and fond of literature, and analogously with the others. And they explain a specialty this way: it is a road that leads toward what is in accordance with virtue through a skill or through part of a skill.¹¹

One claim that is made here is that the characteristics of ordinary persons really do differ sharply from corresponding characteristics in the wise. Music, literature, driving, and hunting were all part of a proper upbringing for a Greek male of sufficient income; the word “encyclical” implies that they are just the skills of the usual liberal education. To say, contrary to intuition, that only the wise person is fond of such things is to assert that even very familiar beliefs and attitudes are transformed when held as part of an overall-coherent epistemic state. Of course no one would deny that ordinary people can be good with horses or can have read the plays of Euripides. But ordinary people might not understand each of their various pursuits that would they would need to do in order to live “in accordance with nature.” It must be on grounds that the wise person does so understand them that the specialties are said to be “among the worthwhile conditions.” If the condition is really a worthwhile (*spoudaios*) one as Stoics understand that term, then it can be predicated only of those who are also wise.

So much is clear. But the passage also makes another assertion which does nothing to distinguish normative from ordinary humanity, but is suited rather to differentiate among the wise themselves. This is that the specialties are not themselves forms of knowledge, as are the virtues, but belong rather with the skills; each is “a road ... through a skill or through part of a skill.” A “skill” in Stoicism is like a form of knowledge in that it is a system of stable cognitions (*katalēpseis*).¹² But “skill” is a broader term: there are systems of cognitions which count both as forms of knowledge and skills, but there are also some such systems which count as skills but not as forms of knowledge. No doubt this is because knowledge, as a condition, is a characteristic the wise person’s overall epistemic makeup, something indispensable about the way that person forms and retains correct judgments; for instance, the sage always makes correct apportionments among his various responsibilities. Hence all forms of knowledge are non-scalar and interentailing. But a mere skill may be predicated in greater or lesser degree, and it may be predicated of one wise person without necessarily being predicated of them all.

It may be helpful to think of a skill as one possible subset of a wise person’s entire belief-set, the subset being delimited by reference to some one object-type. It is just because the subset is delimited in this way—essentially, in terms of its content—that the skill in question does not have to be attributed to every imaginable wise person. For Kerferd has argued convincingly that while the manner of the wise person’s knowing is always the same, the content of that knowledge

¹¹ Stobaeus, *Ecl.*, 2.7.5b11, 67.5-12 Wachsmuth (= *SVF* 3.294); similarly 2.7.5k, 73.13-15W.

¹² Sextus AM 7.227, 11.182; it is, further, a system of cognitions “trained together toward some good end” (*SVF* 2.93-95). The cardinal virtues are both skills and forms of knowledge; Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.5b, 58.9-10W.

is left open. As long as all the beliefs held by any one of the wise are true, properly justified, and mutually reinforcing, there is no good reason to insist that all wise persons must know everything and therefore exactly the same things.¹³ It is entirely open, then, to say that each of them may differ from all others in the specific skills that he or she possesses. And this is just what we should expect to find if the beliefs of the wise are all acquired in the same way as everyone else's, through individual experience.

What then is a specialty? It is obvious that having a specialty means being habitually engaged with some one kind of object—horses, music, literature, or the like—and making that habit one's own way of acting in accordance with nature. For a specialty is "a road that leads toward what is in accordance with nature." The specialty itself, then, must be that mental characteristic which makes a person especially inclined to engage in some one class of activity. We might understand it to be a positive attitude toward some object-type which is aimed at by a skill. Such an attitude could well take the form of a belief: a person who is fond of music, for instance, might believe, truly and with justification, that it is appropriate for her to spend many hours a day practicing, studying, or listening to music. This sort of fondness is not in itself a virtue, and it is not by any means necessary for virtue that a person have it, or any specialty at all.¹⁴ One wise person may be fond of music but not of dogs, while another, equally wise, devotes herself to horses, or to a variety of pursuits. Such preferences are personality traits of the wise, products of their varied experience; they are not what it is to be wise.

We saw earlier that the wise person may have a rich and varied affective experience, with many powerful feelings directed at genuine goods and evils and, also, some quasi-emotional feelings similar to those of the ordinary person. The specialties, however, are not part of that affective experience. For the specialties, as such, are concerned with the kinds of objects which the wise person recognizes as inconsequential to his or her happiness. One can be fond of music and still understand that playing music is not in itself a good thing, and that being thwarted in a wish to practice is not an evil. The wise person has this right. For the ordinary person, matters are very different.

Scalar conditions in the non-wise: sicknesses and infirmities

Stobaeus lists three classes of non-scalar conditions in ordinary persons: proclivities (*eukataphorai*), sicknesses (*nosēmata*) and infirmities (*arrōstēmata*). Among these, the condition about which we have the fullest information is the one called a "sickness" of mind, a *nosos* or *nosēma* (plural *nosēmata*). Stobaeus reports a definition, a list of examples, an account of the opposite condition, called a *proskopē* or aversion, and a distinction between "sicknesses" and the very similar "infirmities."¹⁵ All of that same material also appears in an earlier report by Cicero and is attributed by him to Chrysippus.¹⁶ The latter source is somewhat awkward to use, in that Cicero, who thinks the Greek account is overdeveloped, chooses to condense it by conflating the terms he uses to translate *nosēma* and *arrōstēma*. He does eventually disambiguate the terms, however, and it becomes clear that the account given in his source was substantially the same as that we have in Stobaeus.

In both sources, a "sickness" is defined as a single belief of a particular kind. In Stobaeus, it is "a desirous opinion which has hardened into a condition and become deep-rooted, according to which people suppose that things which are not choiceworthy are extremely choiceworthy." Similarly, Cicero says that what he is at this point calling an infirmity is "a vigorous opinion that

¹³ Kerferd 1978.

¹⁴ Stob., *Ecl.* 2.7.6d, 77.7 W.

¹⁵ Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2.7.10e, 93.8-14 Wachsmuth, (= *SVF* 3.421, part); compare Chrysippus *apud* Galen, *PHP* 4.5.21-22; Seneca, *Ep.* 75.10-12; Diogenes Laertius 7.115; Athenaeus 11.464d.

¹⁶ *Tusc. Disp.* 4.23-26. [refer to my Appendix C to support the attribution]

some object is worthy of pursuit which is in fact not worthy of pursuit, that opinion being deeply attached and rooted in the mind." Thus the sickness called "fondness for pleasure" (*philēdonia*) must be a deeply-rooted belief that pleasure is worthy of pursuit; i.e., that pleasure is a good for oneself or that it is good for oneself to have it. Exactly analogous are the *proskopai* or aversions, mentioned in both sources as deeply-rooted beliefs that certain objects are worthy of avoidance. An example of an aversion is misogyny, the deeply-rooted belief that women are to be avoided or that being around women is an evil for oneself.

An important part of these definitions is what they say about the objects at which sicknesses and aversions are directed. The insistence that these conditions take as their objects things which are in fact *not* worthy of pursuit or avoidance suggests the class of objects (or, properly speaking, states of affairs) which Stoics call indifferents; that is to say, anything not counted as an instance of virtue or vice. And the examples we are given bear this out. Stobaeus's examples include fondness for women, fondness for wine, fondness for money; and there are many similar items in Cicero and other sources: gluttony, love of good repute, fondness for birds, and so on. (See Table 1.) But it is not only the nature of its object that distinguishes the sickness from other beliefs. Sicknesses also view their objects in a characteristic way, as being "extremely worthy of pursuit" when in fact they are not. The definition stipulates both that the judgment in question must set a certain value on its object and that that evaluation must be in error. It is the erroneous evaluation that distinguishes the sicknesses from the specialties of the wise, which are likewise directed at indifferents and in fact resemble the sicknesses in their nomenclature: compare *philomousia*, *philogrammatia*, *philokunēgia* with *philarguria*, *philodoxia*, *philogunia*. Moreover, the sickness is a mistaken evaluation which "has hardened into a condition and become deep-rooted." "Hardened into a condition" indicates that the sickness is a persistent state rather than a single event; "deep-rooted" suggests, further, that the erroneous belief is unusually difficult to eliminate, one which cannot be corrected without some wrenching readjustment of the personality.

The difference between the sicknesses and the related conditions called "infirmities" (*arrōstēmata*) does not appear to be very significant. Stobaeus indicates that the infirmities are a subclass within the sicknesses: they are "sicknesses that occur together with weakness."¹⁷ This definition, which also appears in Cicero and in Diogenes Laertius, matches well with the attested term: *rhōmē* or "strength" is sometimes mentioned as a quality of mind, and *arrōstēma* adds a privative prefix to this; hence an infirmity is literally a "lack of strength."¹⁸ It is not clear, though, how the mention of "weakness" does anything to modify the definition of sickness already given. "Weakness" is mentioned often enough in Stoic texts, usually as a characteristic of assent in the non-wise: to assent "weakly" or "out of weakness" is to endorse a proposition that a person with a "strong" or fully coherent belief-set would not endorse.¹⁹ It follows, for Stoics, that *all* the mistaken views we hold are held "weakly"—and thus that the sicknesses already satisfy the definition for infirmities. At most, the difference between them will be a matter of emphasis, as that an infirmity is a sickness in someone who is somehow especially tolerant of self-contradiction. But in fact no author makes much of the difference; some use one term, some the other, and the same points are made about each.

Nosēmata and emotion

As concerns this group of conditions we can also trace out just how it is that a trait of character plays itself out in our behavior and, especially, in our emotional experience. For beliefs of the sort identified here figure prominently in Stoic accounts of how emotions are generated.

¹⁷ Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2.7.10e, 93.14 Wachsmuth, (= *SVF* 3.421, part).

¹⁸ *Rhōmē* in Stob. 2.7.5b (58.15 Wachsmuth) is one of the "virtues which are not types of knowledge," for which see also Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.* 4.31.

¹⁹ Stob., *Ecl.* 2.7.11m; 111.18-12.8 W; Plutarch, *On Stoic Self-Contradictions* 1057b, etc. The best discussion is Görler 1977.

Indeed, if I understand correctly the explanation of this point that was promulgated especially by Chrysippus, mistaken beliefs about the value of indifferents are one of two principal causes for the emotions that we have.²⁰ The emotion itself is relatively short-lived; it is classed as an impulse and is thus a point-in-time mental event.²¹ The mistaken evaluation, though, persists over time and may be involved in the causation of many single episodes of emotion. To define an emotion as a type of impulse is to say, for one thing, that to have an emotion is also to do something, to bring about some change in the world. The kind of change involved in emotion is (or begins as) a change inside the agent: the action of grieving, for instance, is primarily a matter of contracting one's soul-material, while that of desiring is primarily a matter of extending one's soul-material toward some object. It is thus that Chrysippus and Zeno before him explain the way emotions feel to us. But to say that an emotion is an impulse is also to say that it is, like every human impulse in Stoicism, an act of judgment—that is, an intellectual assent to a proposition with a certain content. For impulse in general, that content takes the form, "It is appropriate for me (*kathēkei moi*) to do X right now (*autothen*)."²² Therefore an emotion, too, must assent to some proposition like "it is appropriate for me right now, my circumstances being what they are, to have *this* feeling." And in fact it is that content, or some more particularized version of it, that is definitive for emotion; the feeling itself merely supervenes on the judgment.

Let us look more closely, then, at that propositional content. This is spelled out for us more fully in the definitions that are standardly given for the four major emotion-types or genera. We are told, for instance, that emotions in the genus distress are caused by "a fresh believing that an evil is present toward which it is appropriate to be contracted." Similarly, desires are caused by "believing that a good is in prospect ... that belief itself including a motive element as to that believing a thing really to reach for"; instances of fear believe "that an evil is in prospect ... a thing really to avoid"; instances of delight believes "that a good is present, toward which it is appropriate to uplift [one's spirits]."²³ Now in each of these cases, the specified content includes three components: (1) an evaluation of some object as bad or good, (2) a belief concerning the appropriateness of some affective response, and (3) a belief that said object is either present or in prospect. These components can easily be arranged into a kind of practical syllogism which yields the relevant impulsive impression as its conclusion. Take for example the delight of someone who has finally won the Massachusetts lottery:

- (1) Having a lot of money is a good thing.
 - (2) When a good thing is present to me, it is appropriate for me to be delighted.
 - (3) I have just now acquired a great deal of money.
- Conclusion: it is appropriate for me to be delighted right now.

Here (1) and (2) are beliefs one already has at the time one comes to believe (3). Believing (1) and/or (2) does not in itself constitute an emotion; it is rather a cognitive condition that is more or less stable over a period of time. But neither would an acceptance of (3) result in emotion if (1)

²⁰ Reasons for attributing the analysis as stated here to Chrysippus are two: Cicero's principal account in *Tusc. Disp.* 3 was heavily influenced by Chrysippus, and this account lays considerable stress on this structure (3.24-27, 52-75, note esp. 61 *fin.*), and the Chrysippian therapy for grief reported by Cicero in *Tusc. Disp.* 76-77 differs from the Cleanthean specifically in its emphasis on the importance of the appropriateness premise (premise 2 on p. 00).

²¹ Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2.7.10 (88.8-12 Wachsmuth): "They [the Stoics] say that a *pathos* is 'an excessive impulse disobedient to choice-making reason' or 'an irrational movement of the mind contrary to nature' and that every *pathos* belongs to the mind's directive faculty."

²² Stob., *Ecl.* 2.7.9, 86.17-18 Wachsmuth.

²³ Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2.7.10b, 90.14-16 Wachsmuth (= *SVF* 3.394 part)

and (2) were not already in place. So the evaluative belief, (1), is necessary for the emotion to occur, though not sufficient for it; it is a cause, though not the sole cause, of that event. And that same evaluative belief may also function as a cause of other emotions concerned with money. If instead of gaining money the person is only considering the prospect of gaining money, the emotion generated might be desire; if he considers the prospect of losing money, it might be fear, and so forth. Different versions of premise (2) will come into play in each case, but proposition (1) will be the same for that entire range of emotions.

We see, then, how a person who has one of the traits called "sicknesses" will be especially disposed to experience a range of emotions in connection with one particular object. That it is good to have lots of money is something that most of us probably do believe to some extent, just as we believe in the intrinsic value of many other external objects. Accordingly, any of us is likely to have some feelings about winning the lottery or losing our shirts on the stock market. But the person who has the *nosēma* of money-fondness will exhibit a much clearer and more definite pattern of emotions. Because his belief is that money is extremely choiceworthy, he is likely to have stronger feelings about it than the average person, or to be emotional about much smaller sums. No doubt he will also give such priority to the possession of money that his emotions about that object will take precedence over other emotions he might have had: he will be much more anxious about his veterinarian's bill than he is about his dog. Of course, he himself may not analyze the matter as we have done. He may well experience the emotions as involuntary forces arising from some mysterious region of the self. But a reflective observer will still say with confidence that it is his special evaluative belief that is at fault.

Because the "sicknesses" are so deeply implicated in the aetiology of emotion, and because emotions are themselves acts of judgment, there is some potential for confusion between the evaluative beliefs which are causes of emotion and the point-in-time judgments which actually constitute emotions. A much-cited passage in Diogenes Laertius speaks of three of the conditions Cicero and Stobaeus call *nosēmata* as if they were themselves examples of emotions; moreover, it attributes that identification to Chrysippus himself.

They [the Stoics] think that the *pathē* are judgments, as Chrysippus says in his work *On Emotions*. For [he says that] fondness for money (*philarguria*) is a supposition that money is a fine thing, and similarly with drunkenness, stubbornness,²⁴ and so forth. (7.111)

An interpreter who studied only this passage might well conclude that a *pathos* for Chrysippus is simply a judgment of value. As it stands, this cannot be right. Chrysippus does, certainly, believe that the *pathē* are judgments, but he holds also that they are impulses, mental events which essentially involve some temporary change in the mind-material.²⁵ Judgments with only the content specified here would not satisfy the Stoic requirements for impulses: they might be necessary for the emotion to occur, but they could not be sufficient for it. Nor is it even plausible to say that what happens when I become angry over the veterinarian's bill is just that I decide, then and there, that money is a fine thing to have. *That* I must have believed all along; it is the interaction of that pre-existing belief with other beliefs, including the new information about my veterinarian, that generates the emotion.

Why, then, does Diogenes Laertius believe that greed and stubbornness are among Chrysippus's examples of *pathē*? The answer could be that Chrysippus did sometimes use the word *pathos* to refer to those and similar long-term conditions. We have a clear example of this usage in a passage from Book 4 of the *Peri Pathōn*, quoted by Galen; it is a misleading usage, but not

²⁴ For stubbornness (*akolasia*), compare *L. pervicacia*, labeled a *nosēma* by Cicero at *Tusc. Disp.* 4.26.

²⁵ See esp. Galen, *PHP* 4.2.1-5 = *SVF* 3.463.

altogether unmotivated.²⁶ Chrysippus is comparing the practice of philosophy to that of medicine: just as the doctor must have intimate knowledge of the illnesses (*pathē*) of the body, so also the “doctor of the mind” must have intimate knowledge of a variety of conditions of the mind.

For we do also say in reference to the mind that some people are strong or weak or have good tension or lack tension, and also that they are sick or healthy, and it is also in the same way that we speak of illness (*pathos*) and infirmity and things like that in the mind.

There is some word-play: the usual sense of *pathos*, which predominates in other fragments of this work, can hardly have been forgotten. Chrysippus perhaps feels that an overlap between *pathos* in the sense of “emotion” and *pathos* in the sense of “medical symptom” gives more point to his metaphor of philosophy as a healing art for the mind. In this somewhat rhetorical passage, he is not concerned about maintaining the distinction between condition and movements.

Very probably it is this ambiguity in Chrysippus’s usage which is to blame for an apparent error in Cicero’s account of the Stoic theory. Cicero has taken quite a bit of heat for remarking, at *Tusc. Disp.* 3.7 and occasionally thereafter, that an appropriate Latin translation for what Stoics mean by *pathos* could be *morbus*. *Morbus* would of course be fine for *nosēma* (and is his standard rendering for that term in *Tusc. Disp.* 4.23-26), but it certainly doesn’t mean “emotion” as *pathos* does. Cicero may have been misled by Chrysippus’s play on words, or he may be trying rather clumsily to reproduce it. Errors along the same line can be traced also in some of the later Greek handbooks.²⁷

Proclivities: A cognitivist account

Returning now to Stobaeus’s list of scalar conditions of mind (p. 00), we find one group of conditions we have not yet considered. These are the proclivities, of which that passage lists as examples “enviousness” (*phthoneria*) and “tendency toward grief” (*epilupia*). Another portion of Stobaeus explains that a proclivity is a tendency toward some specific emotion; alternatively, it is a tendency toward some action contrary to nature.

A proclivity is a proneness to emotion, as to one of the actions contrary to nature. Examples include a tendency to grief, irascibility, enviousness, a tendency to wrath, and things like that. There are also proclivities toward other actions contrary to nature, such as toward theft and adultery and violence, in accordance with which persons are called thieves, adulterers, or violent characters.²⁸

Irascibility, for instance, is the condition of those who are easily angered: they are not angry all the time, but they become angry more often than other people. Similarly, a person might be timid, that is, have a proclivity to fear, even when he is not actually afraid, and so on with grief, anxiety, envy, and the other examples on Table 2.²⁹

²⁶ Galen, *PHP* 5.2.22-24, 26-27 = *SVF* 3.471.

²⁷ Thus Stob. 2.7.10bc (91.3-4, 19-20 Wachsmuth) lists *philēdonia*, *philoploutia*, and *philodoxia* as examples of desire; and ps.-Andronicus 4 similarly lists no fewer than eight items which seem really to be *nosēmata*: *philēdonia*, *philochrēmata*, *philotimia*, *philozōia*, *philosōmatia*, *gastrimargia*, *oinophlugia*, *lagneia*.

²⁸ *Ecl.* 2.7.10e, 93W. The Stoic author now gives *eueptōsia* as the main term for proclivity using *eukataphoria* (“proneness”) in explanation. The two terms are obvious synonyms.

²⁹ Incidentally, there can also be proclivities to good things, what Cicero calls *facultates* (4.28). Presumably this means that while all virtuous people are courageous, some are especially likely to do brave actions, or that while all virtuous people are susceptible to that class of feelings called the *eupatheiai*, one individual wise person could in theory be especially prone to a particular feeling such as joy or reverence.

The proclivities bear an obvious resemblance to the sicknesses, since both types of condition predispose an individual to experience some emotions rather than others. However, the pattern of predisposition is different for the proclivities. A person with a "sickness" is especially concerned about some one object-type, and experiences a range of emotions concerned with that object. Someone with a proclivity, by contrast, experiences some one emotion-type more than all others, and must therefore experience it in connection with a wide range of objects. Hence while the names of specific sicknesses are usually derived from those objects—*philodoxia* from reputation (*doxa*), *gunaikomania* from women (*gunaikes*), and so on—the names of the proclivities indicate only the nature of the response: *epilupia* is a proneness to grief (*lupē*), *orgilotēs* a proneness to anger (*orgē*), and so on. The one cares deeply about, say, birds, and may become mad or sad or glad about them; the other has no special attachment to birds or anything else, but merely becomes mad about everything.

Cicero compares the proclivities to the condition of people who have trouble with their sinuses or with intestinal cramping: the stuffy nose or abdominal pain is present only some of the time, but the condition of being prone to those ailments is with those unfortunate people all of the time (*Tusc. Disp.* 4.27-28). The comparison undoubtedly reproduces a similar comparison made by Chrysippus. We know from Galen that Posidonius criticized Chrysippus for comparing the minds of non-wise persons during and prior to emotions to "bodies which have a tendency to incur fevers or diarrhea or things like that upon a slight and chance pretext."³⁰ It is an easy guess that the comparison made by Chrysippus (which is not otherwise extant) was just the same as Cicero is making; that is, that he compared mental proclivities like irascibility to bodily proclivities like asthma. Indeed, if we make that assumption it becomes easier to understand and resolve Posidonius's objection. Posidonius assumes that what is being compared to the body without any particular tendency to illness is the mind which never experiences any emotion at all—that is, the mind of the sage. This, he says, is not an accurate comparison, since the minds of sages are actually proof against emotion, while every body, even a healthy one, retains some susceptibility to disease. But Posidonius may misunderstand the analogy. His objection is not well taken if Chrysippus's intent is, like Cicero's, to explain that some (but not all) non-wise persons have particular tendencies to experience certain emotions upon small provocation. In that case, the minds which are analogous to healthy bodies may be those of other non-wise persons, those who are not especially given to any one emotion. The analogy then holds well enough, since such persons will still be susceptible—one might even say, prone—to emotions generally. But Chrysippus may not have made this part of the comparison explicit.³¹

³⁰ Galen, *PHP* 5.2.2-7, fr. 163 Edelstein and Kidd, lines 1-30: "They [Chrysippus and Posidonius] do not give the same explanation concerning what kind of mind inferior persons have during emotions and prior to emotions. For Chrysippus says that it is analogous to bodies which have a tendency to incur fevers or diarrhea or things like that upon a slight and chance pretext. Posidonius criticizes this comparison: he says that the mind of the inferior person should not be compared to such bodies but simply to healthy bodies. For whether they become feverish for large or small causes does not make any difference as concerns their experiencing this, that is, having the *pathōs*, at all, rather, they differ only in that some are more prone and others less. For this reason he says that Chrysippus is improperly comparing the health of the mind to that of the body, and the sickness [of the mind] to the condition which falls easily into sickness. For there is a mind which is free of *pathē*—that of the sage, obviously—but no body is free of *pathē*. It would have been more just to compare the minds of inferior persons 'either to bodily health, which includes a proneness to sickness (for that is the term Posidonius uses) 'or to sickness itself,' since it is a condition which can only be either disease-ridden or actually diseased. In fact, this is what he says: 'For this reason, also, sickness of mind does not, as Chrysippus thinks, resemble a disease-ridden condition of body through which it is subject to incur irregular non-periodic fevers; rather, mental 'sickness' resembles either bodily health, which includes a proclivity to sickness, or the sickness itself. For bodily illness is a condition already diseased, but the sickness Chrysippus is talking about is more like a proclivity to fevers.'"

³¹ Chrysippus's fondness for analogies involving health and disease is a frequent source of confusion. In the present analogy, the "sickness" (*nosos*) is an observable symptom such as fever and is thus analogous to an

We have seen that the sicknesses are cognitive conditions consisting entirely in a particular sort of belief. If we assume that the proclivities, too, consist in belief, then we may be inclined to understand these conditions in such a way that they function very similarly to the sicknesses in generating emotions. For mistaken attributions of value are only one of two kinds of prior beliefs which count as principal causes of emotions. In addition to regarding some external object as good (or bad), one must also believe that some certain response is the appropriate response for oneself to have in the presence or prospect of such an object. That is, one must hold a belief similar in structure to the one labeled (2) in the pathetic syllogism on page 11: that “when a good is present, it is appropriate for me to be delighted.” Suppose for a moment that just as a sickness is an exceptionally strong commitment to some version of premise (1) in that syllogism, so also a proclivity is an exceptionally strong commitment to some version of (2). A person with this commitment would not be very concerned about any one object-type; rather, he would believe that some one response—say, fear—is extremely or very often appropriate as a way of dealing with the world. He might believe, for instance, that fear is the appropriate response to an unusually wide range of situation-types. While any non-wise person might think fear is an appropriate response some of the time, this person thinks it is the right reaction to the rumble of a subway train or the growl of a Pekinese. As a result, he will indeed be afraid of those things, whenever the relevant circumstances arise, whether or not he recognizes that his cognitive makeup is such as we have described. And this is just what it is to be timid.

This is an attractively neat account of the proclivities. It gives the Stoics a strongly cognitivist understanding of all four of Stobaeus’s differentiable conditions—for the infirmities are not significantly different from the sicknesses, and the specialties of the wise, while they are not specifically said to be beliefs, are very closely linked to the skills, which are systems of cognitions. Our evidence is thin: no proper definition for the proclivities is extant, and so the interpretation given here cannot be regarded as secure; still, in the absence of clear evidence to the contrary, it is the style of explanation we should prefer. And the interpretation in terms of appropriateness-beliefs has a further advantage in that it can be extended to cover tendencies toward other sorts of actions contrary to nature, as mentioned in the Stobaeus passage quoted on page 14. A proclivity to adultery, for instance, can be explained by the operation in one’s everyday practical reasoning of a premise that “sleeping with other people’s spouses is an extremely appropriate thing for me to do,” and so also with tendencies toward other action-types such as theft or violence.

But we hear very little about this second type of proclivity. Perhaps it was felt that tendencies of this kind had already been adequately explained in the account of personality traits disposing to emotion—that a habitual adulterer must just be someone with *philogunia*, and the person tending to violence can also be described as irascible. For it is a remarkable fact about the Stoic approach to ordinary personalities that it is almost exclusively interested in those traits which determine our emotional experience. Character is thought of as essentially a set of emotive dispositions; observable behavior is considered solely as manifesting the emotional impulse. Our emotional lives are central to who we are: to a large extent, we are even identified with them.

This emphasis is merely a concession to human life as we know it. It is still true, for Stoics, that the emotions as we know them are founded in error, that they are perversions of the sorts of affective responses humans should have and were designed to have. The wise have personalities: they have their varieties of experience, their personal knowledge bases, their favorite pursuits. As we know, the wise also have their own varieties of affect; indeed, a close study of the texts suggests that their lives are surprisingly rich in affective dimensions. But their personalities are not structured around affect,

actual episode of emotion; it thus cannot be the same as the *nosos* or *nosēma* discussed above. Misunderstanding this, a reader might easily assume that a *euemptōsia* is actually a tendency to acquire a *nosēma* or *arrōstēma* in the technical sense. It may be for this reason that Cicero indicates, in *Tusc. Disp.* 4.28, that a proclivity is properly understood as “a proclivity to become infirm (*aegrotare*).”

whereas those of the non-wise apparently are. Reasons for this are to be sought in the developmental account of character, in the many-layered process of maturation and corruption that produces an ordinary adult human. An understanding of Stoic thought on character is not really complete without a consideration of that developmental account, and for that reason I do treat that subject at length in another part of my larger project. For the moment, though, I am content to conclude that Stoicism did have considerable resources for describing the personality traits of individual humans; it was not limited to describing a person merely as wise or foolish.

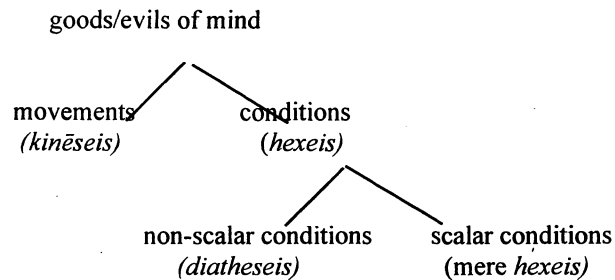
FIGURE 1

TABLE 1: REPRESENTATIVE SICKNESSES AND AVERSIONS

CONDITION	ATTESTED TERM(S)
fondness for glory	<i>philodoxia</i> , ^a <i>doxomania</i> , ^e <i>gloriae cupiditas</i> ^c
fondness for money	<i>philarguria</i> , ^{bd} <i>avaritia</i> ^c
liking for women	<i>philogunia</i> , ^h <i>gunaikomania</i> , ^{ef} <i>mulierositas</i> ^c
craziness for food	<i>opsomania</i> , ^e <i>ligurritio</i> ^c
fondness for wine	<i>philoinia</i> , ^{be} <i>vinulentia</i> ^c
fondness for pleasure	<i>philêdonia</i> ^{ad}
craziness for birds	<i>ornithomania</i> , ^f <i>ortugomania</i> ^e
hatred of women	<i>misogunia</i> , ^h <i>mulierum odium</i> ^c
hatred of humanity	<i>misanthrôpia</i> , ^h <i>generis humani odium</i> ^c
hatred of wine	<i>misoinia</i> ^h

Sources:
a. Diogenes Laertius 7.115 (and cf. *philarguria* and *methê* in 7.111); b. Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2.7.10e (93.1-14 W); c. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 4.25-26; d. Plutarch, *On Stoic self-contradictions* 1050d, e. Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistai* 11.464d (*SVF* 3.667), f. Chrysippus in Galen, *PHP* 4.5.21-22 (*SVF* 3.480)

TABLE 2: REPRESENTATIVE PROCLIVITIES

CONDITION	ATTESTED TERM(S)
enviousness	<i>phthoneria</i> , ^{ab} <i>invidus esse</i> ^c
irascibility	<i>orgilotês</i> , ^b <i>iracundia</i> ^c
cowardice	<i>deilia</i> , ^d <i>timidus esse</i> ^c
tendency to pity	<i>eleêmosunê</i> , ^a <i>misericors esse</i> ^c
tendency to grief	<i>epilupia</i> ^b
tendency to wrath	<i>akrocholia</i> ^b
anxiety	<i>anxietas</i> ^c
desirousness	<i>libidinosus esse</i> ^c

Sources:

a. Diogenes Laertius 7.115; b. Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2.7.10e (93.1-14 W); c. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 4.25; d. Plutarch, *On Stoic self-contradictions* 1050d