4 The Stoic doctrine of the affections of the soul

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According to Stoic doctrine the wise man is *apathēs*, free from *pathē*, free from affections. We have some notion of what the Stoics have in mind when they say this. After all, the equanimity of the Stoic sage has become so proverbial that the adjective 'stoic' (or 'stoical') has become part of our various vernaculars.

But it is also well known that, if we try to say what this freedom from affect is supposed to amount to, we face a difficulty. We may think that the Stoics mean to say that nothing will move the wise man, that he is entirely free from any emotion. This, in fact, is a view which often has been taken. But, given this view, one will be inclined to criticise the Stoic sage as somehow inhuman, as unfeeling, as having no feelings, when this not only would be entirely natural, but indeed, we think, the only appropriate human response. Hence we might rather think that the Stoics, for all their radicalism, cannot really have meant to assert that the sage is free from any emotion. Fortunately, there can be hardly any doubt on the matter. For it is well attested that the Stoics ascribe to the sage a variety of emotional states, the so-called *eupatheiai*, e.g. joy, which they characterise as a certain kind of elation (cf. D.L. VII 115, *SVF* III 431).

But, if we thus try to defend the Stoic sage against the charge of insensitivity, and claim that the Stoics, in denying their sage any affect, by no means deny him any feeling, we face another difficulty. In claiming that the wise man is free from affect, the Stoics seem to want to deny the view, held by Plato, Aristotle and their followers, that at least some of the *pathē*, some of the affections of the soul, are natural and appropriate, even for the wise man, namely those which it is reasonable to have, those which in their degree and their manner constitute a reasonable emotional response to the situation which gives rise to them. That the Stoics, in saying that the wise man is free from affections, mean to contradict the Platonists and the Peripatetics seems to be confirmed by the fact that the Platonists and Peripatetics, in turn, make a point of claiming that the wise man will be *metriopathēs*, i.e. measured or moderate in his emotional response, rather than free from any affect altogether (cf. D.L. V 31; Albinus *Isagoge* p. 184,24). In making this claim the Platonists and the Peripatetics seem to want to deny the Stoic claim that the wise man is free from any affect. But,

if this is so, it would seem that the Stoics must be denying that the sage has any feelings. For if, in claiming that the sage is free from affect, they just meant to claim that nothing will move the sage unduly, beyond the limits of moderation, there would be no disagreement with the Platonists and the Peripatetics, who hardly would take issue with this claim. For the claim to be controversial, it seems, we have to deny the Stoic sage even the measured emotional response which the Platonists and the Peripatetics expect from their wise man. Hence we seem to be thrown back on the first assumption, namely the assumption that the wise man will be free from any emotion. But we have already seen that this assumption is unacceptable. Hence we seem to face a dilemma.

How do we find our way out of this apparent dilemma? Roughly speaking, the solution of the problem seems to me to be the following. As is well known, the Stoics assume that the human soul does not consist both of a rational part and an irrational part, as Plato, Aristotle (at least in his moral psychology), and their followers claimed, but only of a mind or reason. Hence, for the Stoics, all emotions are motions, inclinations and disinclinations, of reason, since, according to them, there is no irrational part of the soul they could be motions or affections of. But some of these emotions they take to be rational, some to be irrational. It is these irrational emotions which are called affections of the soul. The rational emotions are those of a perfectly rational reason whose sentiments are not coloured and intensified or weakened by any false assumptions, assumptions, e.g. concerning the value of the things we are attracted or repelled by. Only the emotions of the wise man will be rational, because only the reason of a wise man is perfectly rational, undistorted by any false beliefs. Since none of us is wise, all the emotions we have, and all the emotions we are familiar with, are irrational and thus affections of the mind. Thus, if by 'emotion' we mean the kinds of emotions we are familiar with, the Stoic sage will, indeed, be free from emotion. But the Stoics allow for the possibility of purely rational emotions, and these they do not want to deny their sage when they claim that he is free from affections.

The Platonic–Aristotelian tradition has a theory of those emotions which we ordinary human beings actually have, and, naturally enough, it goes on the assumption that all human emotions are like the ones we are familiar with. Thus the Stoics and the Platonists and the Peripatetics agree in what they call 'affections of the soul'. But they disagree in the way they conceive of them. For the Platonic–Aristotelian tradition assumes an irrational part of the soul and it identifies the emotions as the motions, inclinations and disinclinations, of this irrational part of the soul. It then proceeds to distinguish among them between reasonable and unreasonable emotions. Those emotions are reasonable which are in the line of

reason. If I have good reason to be afraid, then it is reasonable for me to be afraid. Those emotions are unreasonable which are out of line with reason and might even interfere with its exercising its proper functions. If I know very well that there is no reason to be afraid, but nevertheless do feel fear, my emotion is unreasonable. The reason why some emotions are natural and reasonable is that their objects are good or bad. Hence we have every reason to be drawn to or to be repelled by them, to be satisfied when we have obtained what is good and managed to avoid what is bad, and to be dissatisfied in the opposite case. But the Stoics think that all this rests on a terrible confusion. The objects of our so-called reasonable emotions, e.g. life, health, beauty, honour, wealth, and death, illness, ugliness, shame, poverty, all these things in truth are neither good nor bad (D.L. VII 102, *SVF* III 117), but entirely indifferent, and hence it is utterly irrational to be moved by them as if they were goods or evils. Hence all these emotions, including the supposedly reasonable ones, are to be rejected, because even they presuppose that their objects have a value which in fact they do not have.

Thus, when the Stoics claim that the wise man is free from affections, they do mean to deny him all the emotions we are familiar with, and they do in particular mean to deny him, without exception, all the feelings which the Platonic–Aristotelian tradition calls affections of the soul and locates in an irrational part of the soul. But they do not mean to deny him any feeling whatsoever, because they assume that there are purely rational emotions of reason, which none of us, though, is familiar with, because we have not learnt to acquire the right attitude towards the objects of our feelings. This, in rough outline, is the solution of the problem which I want to propose and to clarify in this paper.

Obviously, to understand the Stoic position, we first of all have to understand why the Stoics take issue with the way the Platonic–Aristotelian tradition conceptualises the affections of the soul as motions of an irrational part of the soul. We may assume that all philosophers were agreed that there are irrational motions of the soul, that at times we get upset or excited without there being a reason which would warrant our upset or excitement. We also may assume that philosophers were primarily interested in those cases of such irrational motions of the soul, in which somebody does something, or fails to do something, against all reason, and in which we think that we can only explain his behaviour by assuming that it is not guided by reasons, but determined by some irrational factor. Finally we may assume that they regarded those cases as especially interesting and as somehow paradigmatic in which a person not only quite obviously behaves quite unreasonably, but in which the person himself is aware that he is acting unreasonably, cases in which it seems

that the person is moved by some irrational motion of the soul to act irrationally against his own better judgment. It was such irrational motions of the soul which one called '*pathē*' or 'affections', and perhaps the term '*pathos*' originally was restricted to such flagrantly irrational emotions, and only later came to refer to the emotions quite generally. In any case, when Democritus (Clemens Alex. *Paed.* 1 6, DK B31) says that wisdom frees us from the *pathē* of the soul, just like medicine heals the ills of the body, there is no reason to suppose that Democritus thought that wisdom frees us from all emotion.

But however this may be, it was agreed by all that there are such irrational affections of the soul which move us to act irrationally, often, it seems, against our own better judgment. What one could not agree on was how these cases were to be explained. There is reason to believe that Socrates thought that there is no such thing as acting against one's own better judgment. What does happen is that reason in certain circumstances gets confused and, instead of holding on to its better judgment, follows some other judgment. If reason knew the truth, it could never get confused in this way. Thus, according to Socrates, such cases reveal nothing but a failure of reason which in its weakness does not hold on to the true belief, but accepts a false one and acts on it. Plato, Aristotle, and their followers, on the other hand, believed that such cases could not be explained as purely intellectual failures, that one had to assume that besides reason there is an irrational part of the soul with its own needs and demands which may conflict with the demands of reason and which may move us to act against the dictates of reason, if reason has not managed to bring the irrational part of the soul firmly under its control. Thus the irrational behaviour in question first of all reveals a failure of the irrational part of the soul, namely the failure to produce an emotional response to the situation which is adequate to it. Only secondarily do such cases reveal a failure of reason, namely the failure to control the emotions. And this failure ultimately involves a cognitive failure. For one can only be practically wise, if the irrational part of the soul has been conditioned in such a way as to invariably produce the emotional response which is in line with reason, which reason finds appropriate. Though such responses are irrational in the wider sense that they do not have their origin in reason, but seem to arise spontaneously, there is also a sense in which we may call them reasonable or rational, to distinguish them from the emotions which are irrational in a narrower sense. These emotions not only do not have their origin in reason, they also are not in conformity with reason.

Though it is only irrational motions in the narrower sense which cause the kind of irrational behaviour in question, and though there is reason to suppose that originally only these irrational motions were referred to as '*pathē*', following Aristotle all irrational motions in the wider sense of the word 'irrational' come to be called '*pathē*' or 'affections of the soul'. The reason for this is perhaps the following. In calling all irrational motions of the soul 'affections', attention is drawn to the presumed fact that the irrational motions which cause irrational behaviour do not differ in kind or in origin, but only in intensity, from ordinary quite unobjectionable emotions. It is not the emotion itself which is objectionable. Indeed, in this tradition, it seems, the very word '*pathos*' or 'affection' is taken to indicate that the irrational motions of the soul quite generally, not just those which are irrational in the narrower sense, are a thing which we suffer, which comes over us without our active participation, which is not directly in our control, which is not something we can make up our mind to have or not to have, as we please. It is for this reason that in this tradition the term '*pathos*' takes on the connotation of '*passio*', 'affect', 'purely passive affection'. What we have control over is not the affect itself, but at best the disposition or character which, depending on the circumstances, produces a certain kind of emotional response. At least to some extent we are in a position to change ourselves in such a way that the circumstances no longer evoke an emotional response which is quite unreasonable and by which we may get carried away so as to act unreasonably. But there is not the slightest suggestion that all emotional responses ought to be suppressed or even entirely eradicated. They rather are taken to be an essential part of human nature and to fulfil a positive function, a function, though, which they can only fulfil, if the disposition which produces them has been conditioned so as to produce responses which are in line with reason.

The way the Stoics conceive of the matter is radically different. Cicero reports (*Ac.* 1 39): 'whereas the ancients claimed that the commotions are natural and have nothing to do with reason, and whereas they located desire in one part of the soul, and reason in another, he [sc. Zeno] would not even agree with that. For he thought that these commotions were equally voluntary and arose from a judgment which was a matter of mere opinion [. . .]' This report seems to capture the salient features of the Stoic position and of what was at issue between the Stoics and those who followed the ancients, i.e. the followers of Plato and Aristotle. In the Platonic–Aristotelian tradition one opted for the position that the affections are commotions which are quite independent of reason and have

their origin in an irrational part of the soul. But, in taking this position, one consciously rejected the Socratic position, that the affections of the soul which lead us to behave irrationally, are nothing but aberrations of human reason. And it is obviously this Socratic position which the Stoics try to defend. They want to claim that, as Socrates had said, such cases reveal nothing but an intellectual failure. Reason in its weakness abandons the correct belief and espouses a false one (Galen, *De dogm. Hipp. et Plat.* IV 6, p. 380 M, *SVF* III 473). If there seems to be internal conflict or if it even seems that we act against our better judgment, this is because reason may be wavering and now endorse one belief and then the other, it might oscillate between the two, and this so rapidly that we might not even be aware of the fact that for a moment we had changed our mind (Plutarch, *De virtute morali* 7 446f., *SVF* III 459). To defend this view they take the position that irrational affections of the soul which lead us astray themselves are nothing but the mistaken judgments which take the place of the true judgments which we abandoned (cf. e.g. Cicero, *Fin.* III 35; cf. *SVF* III 456ff.). But in order to be able to say this they have to say that all affections of the soul really are affections of reason, to be more precise irrational mistaken judgments of reason. And to say this is to deny the existence of an irrational part of the soul. For the irrational part of the soul with its irrational motions only was introduced in order to avoid the conclusion that the affections of the soul which lead us astray have their origin in nothing but a failure of reason.

But why should the Stoics have been attracted by such an extreme view? Cicero's brief remarks quoted above give us a first clue. Obviously it is assumed, by both parties in the debate, that the behaviour of reason is directly in our control, voluntary. Whether we agree to accept a belief or not is up to us. We can make up our mind whether we want to believe something or rather to suspend judgment. But one removes the affections from the immediate control of reason by placing them in an irrational part of the soul with a life of its own, as it were; and in doing so one is also denying any direct and immediate responsibility for these affections and the behaviour they produce. And to the extent in which one is inclined, as Plato, e.g., sometimes seems to be, to identify one's true self with one's reason, one also is inclined to regard one's affections as something which is not one's own, as if it were an animal one has to tame and not oneself who displayed these affections. But it is not just that one thus denies immediate responsibility for one's affections and to some extent disowns them. According to the Stoics, one also encourages irrationality and immorality by providing it with a theoretical excuse. For, if one assumes that an irrational part of the soul with its motions, inclinations and disinclinations, is part of human nature, then it is only reasonable if one also assumes that some of these motions, inclinations and disinclinations, are natural; that we are naturally constructed in such a way as to be inclined towards things which are good for us and to be disinclined towards things which are bad for us. Thus it seems that, if one assumes an irrational part of the soul with its own inclinations and disinclinations, one also is committed to the view that some of the objects of these inclinations and disinclinations are goods or evils. This, in fact, is what Platonists and Peripatetics teach, following in this the view of common mankind; however much they may stress the higher goods of the soul, and the relative unimportance of the goods of the body and of external goods, they nevertheless do recognise them as goods, and hence legitimise an inclination towards them which would be appropriate if they, indeed, were goods. Even if they do tell us that health is only a good of the body, they do acknowledge it as a good and hence help us to justify the great upset which we feel when we have lost our health, as if we had lost a good. But this is a thorough and fundamental confusion. None of the objects of the so-called natural and reasonable affections is a good or an evil. Wealth and poverty, health and illness, youth and old age, beauty and ugliness, honour and shame, and whatever else may be claimed to naturally repel or attract us, are neither good nor bad, but entirely indifferent.

For, if they were good or bad, reason should be able to recognise them as such, and if reason recognised them as such it would incline us to seek them out or shun them. Thus there would be no need for nature to endow us with an irrational part of the soul which, if it functions properly, inclines us towards what is good for us and disinclines us from what is bad for us. Reason itself would suffice to produce a behaviour conducive to our survival and our well-being.

It is for such reasons that the Stoics cannot accept the Aristotelian concept of the affections of the soul and insist, instead, on treating them as voluntary, but irrational motions of reason. If one did not, of one's own choice, subscribe to the frivolous and arbitrary belief that health is a good, but instead realised that health is completely indifferent, one would not be upset if one lost one's health. The upset is a result of the confusion of one's reason, and of nothing else. Hence they also think that it is grossly misleading to think of the affections of the soul as *pathē* in the sense of passive affections. They rather are *pathē* in the sense of illnesses, diseases. Indeed, they are the diseases of the mind which we have to cure. Thus Democritus was quite right when he said that wisdom frees the soul from its affections just like medicine cures the diseases of the body.

The Stoics, then, claim that the affections of the soul are voluntary, but

irrational, motions of reason. To be more precise, they claim that the affections have their origin in a judgment of reason, or even that they themselves are judgments of reason, namely misjudgments to the effect that something is good or bad when, in fact, it is neither, but completely indifferent.

But before we turn to this more specific thesis, that the affections are nothing but judgments of reason, let us first consider the more general thesis that the affections are motions of reason, form part of the life of reason. For one difficulty which we have in trying to understand the Stoic theory clearly is that we find the mere suggestion that there are motions, inclinations or disinclinations, of reason which by themselves might suffice to account for our behaviour, very difficult to understand, if not unintelligible. The reason for this is simply that we tend to look at rationality as a formal ability or capacity, or perhaps rather as a set of abilities or capacities which allow us, ideally in accordance with logic, to draw certain conclusions and to decide on certain courses of action. But, in order to be able to do this, we think, reason has to be supplied with the appropriate premisses from the outside. It can only draw inferences, if it is supplied with the data from which to draw inferences. And it can only figure out which course of action we should adopt, if it is supplied with the necessary information concerning our preferences. Thus reason for us is purely instrumental. The ancient conception of reason, on the other hand, and in particular the Stoic conception of reason, is radically different. The Stoics, but also the Platonists and the Peripatetics assume that reason in its natural, mature, completed state is a reason characterised by wisdom. It is assumed that it is part of rationality itself that reason disposes of a certain specifiable knowledge, that it does form certain notions; and that it does come to make certain assumptions concerning the objects of these notions, unless its natural development is thwarted, derailed, perverted. For it is assumed that reason cannot fulfil its natural function without having these notions and these assumptions. It also, correctly, is assumed that perception or sensation would never provide us with a sufficient basis for what we would count as a reasonable way to look at the world. Hence it is, presumably wrongly; assumed that our reason must be constructed in such a way that, given a normal environment, it will form the notions and assumptions which are necessary to arrive at a reasonable view of the world. In any case, rationality is not just characterised by certain formal abilities, but also by certain notions and assumptions about the world.

Moreover, most ancient philosophers, at least since Socrates, do assume that reason itself has its own preferences, inclinations and disinclinations, and that it is part of fully developed reason or rationality to

have the right kind of preferences. Reason is supposed to be able not just to cognitively grasp what is true and what is good, but also to be naturally inclined to what it has recognised as good. Thus the recognition that something is good is supposed to provide not just a sufficient reason, but also a sufficient cause for action. Reason by itself, because of its natural inclination to what is good, can move us to act. Socrates in the *Protagoras* (352bff.) is made to argue that reason is not, as people commonly assume, the slave of the passions. Plato and Aristotle go on the assumption that reason has its own form of desire and is in a position to assert itself against the irrational affections. Plato in the *Republic* (IX 580d) ascribes a special form of desire to each of the three parts of the soul he distinguishes there. Aristotle follows Plato in this regard and repeatedly distinguishes three forms of desire, *epithumia, thūmos*, and *boulēsis*, of which boulesis is identified as the desire of reason (*MM* 1187 b36–7). Already in the *Topics* he had said that *boulēsis* is to be located in the reasoning part of the soul (126 a13). And this view is by no means peculiar to antiquity. It is to be found throughout the Middle Ages. As late an author as Eustachius a Sancto Paulo, whose Summa served as a standard textbook in Descartes' time, talks as if it were completely uncontroversial to claim: '*est autem in superiori animae portione facultas duplex, altera adprehensiva seu cognoscitiva, diciturque intellectus, altera appetitiva, diciturque appetitus rationalis seu voluntas*'. (III 2, disp. 1, 9.1) This text not only shows that even at the end of the Middle Ages reason still was regarded as having a desiderative or appetitive aspect, a form of desire of its own, but also gives us a clue as to how it came about that we think of reason as something to be contrasted with desire and quite generally the passions of the soul. The latter Middle Ages, in part due to reflections on divine omnipotence which came to be an ever increasing concern, attribute such an importance to the will that the will comes to be seen as something opposed to reason or intellect. Instead of being regarded as another function of the intellect, it comes to be seen as a separate faculty of the rational part of the soul contrasted with the intellect. But, given the notorious problems which the doctrine of the will raises, it is not surprising that subsequent philosophers were ready to discard it and to assume instead that reason is purely cognitive and that it is the affections of the soul, rather than some mysterious will, which move us to act.

Upon reflection one might think, though, that the notion that reason has its own desires and inclinations is not quite as strange as it, at first sight, appears. If we are willing to talk about parts or faculties of the soul and to ascribe to them desires, it is not clear at all why we should not ascribe our desire for truth, consistency, clarity, rationality to reason

itself, why we should not say that reason itself is not contented with a given solution of a certain problem and hence continues to think about it till it is satisfied. Admittedly it is easy enough to find other explanations for such desires, satisfactions, or frustrations, but the point is that the notion that reason has its own needs and desires is not in itself absurd, and only appears so implausible because we have become so used to a very different kind of theory.

But, however this may be, it is not the Stoics alone who take the view that there are inclinations and disinclinations of reason which can account for our behaviour. Their view rather is shared by most of our tradition, and what needs to be explained rather is why we no longer share this view. What distinguishes the Stoics from the rest of the tradition is their assumption that all motions of the soul are motions of reason and, ultimately, judgments. We already have seen why the Stoics think that they have to insist that even those irrational affections which, because of their utter irrationality, do not seem to have their origin in reason, nevertheless have to be understood as motions of reason itself. How they can say this will become clearer, if we now consider their more specific thesis that all motions of the soul are judgments or opinions of reason.

It will be easier to understand this, if we make an assumption as to the truth of the matter which seems to be shared by the Stoics. As Aristotle already before them, so the Stoics, too, quite rightly assume that for each affection there is a corresponding perceptible change in the state of the person. If we are afraid or in pain, we quite literally feel anxious, depressed; there is a sense of constriction and withdrawal into oneself. If, on the other hand, we desire something or are pleased, there is a sense of expansion and elation. The Stoics, moreover, assume that we are aware of our state. Thus Chrysippus talks of the changes in the region of the heart which occur when we are sad, and which we become aware of in feeling a certain kind of pain (Gal. *De dogm. Hipp. et Plat.* III 7; p. 302f. M). It seems, then, that we have to distinguish three things, (i) the affection, (ii) the physiological state which corresponds to it, and (iii) a characteristic feeling which we have when we are aware of this physiological state. Let us, e.g., assume that we are afraid that the rain is ruining the crops. In this case there are three things which we have to distinguish: (i) it is one thing to be afraid that the rain is ruining the crops; (ii) it is another thing to be in the physiological state which corresponds to this fear; (iii) it is a third thing to have the kind of feeling which we have when we are afraid, anxious, concerned, a feeling which is produced by our physiological state. Obviously, all three things are so closely related to each other that we tend to conflate them. Thus, ordinarily we tend to speak of our feeling

as if it were the fear itself. The Stoics themselves sometimes talk as if 'fear' referred to the whole complex of belief, physiological state and awareness of this state. This may explain why they sometimes talk as if the affection of the soul were a judgment, but at other times say that the affection has its origin in a judgment. It still seems important to make the distinction. For when one does feel afraid, one just has the feeling which one characteristically has when one is afraid. It does not yet follow from the fact that one does have the feeling that one actually is afraid. For this feeling can also be induced artificially, e.g. by drugs. In this case there is no fear which produced the feeling of anxiety, there is only the feeling of fear. The person in question may in vain try to identify the fear which produced this feeling of anxiety. Exactly because of the close connection between being afraid and feeling anxious, the person may be driven to mistakenly identify some fear as the source of his anxiety.

Given such a distinction, it seems much easier to see how the Stoics can argue that the affection is just another judgment of the mind. They have to argue, e.g. in the case of fear, that they do not claim that feeling afraid is just a judgment, but rather that being afraid is just to make a judgment and that feeling afraid is only the natural consequence of such a judgment. It still will be difficult enough to see how being afraid could just be a matter of making a certain judgment, but at least the claim now no longer sounds outright counterintuitive, given that feelings clearly are not judgments.

Now, to understand how the Stoics might claim that to be afraid is just to make a certain kind of judgment, to have a certain kind of belief, we have to have a closer look at the Stoic theory of judgment. When we talk about a judgment or a belief, we primarily think of the explicit or implicit assertion of a proposition. The judgment or the belief has a certain propositional content, and to judge, we think, is just to assert this proposition. Now, if we think of judgments in this way, it is difficult to see how being afraid could be just a matter of making a certain judgment. It might very well be the case that to be afraid is to be afraid that p, and that in order to be afraid that p we have to assert, at least implicitly, a proposition. But being afraid seems to involve more than just asserting a proposition. But it is telling that, though the Stoics were the first to put us into a position to conceive of a judgment in this way by introducing the notion of a *lekton*, and though they were familiar with the view of judgment referred to, they nevertheless seem to have rejected it. For already Arcesilaus criticised the Stoics for saying that a judgment consists in an assent to an impression, rather than saying that it consists in an assent to the corresponding propositional content, to the *lekton* or *axiōma*, to use Stoic terminology (cf. S.

E. *M* VII 154). What is the difference? According to the Stoics the impressions of rational beings are characterised by the fact that they are articulated by reason in such a way as to invariably have a propositional character. They always are impressions to the effect that something or other is the case or is not the case. But this should not mislead one into thinking that an impression already is sufficiently characterised if we specify its propositional content. For, obviously, one and the same proposition that p can be thought in many different ways, and hence the thought, or the impression, that p will differ correspondingly, depending on the way in which it is thought that p. Hence it is not just the propositional content, but also the way it is thought, which has to enter into a complete characterisation of the impression, and which is relevant to the question whether we ought to give assent to the impression or not. It is for this reason that assent is not a matter of just accepting the proposition, but rather a matter of accepting the impression, since it also does matter how the proposition is thought in the impression. That this is the Stoic view seems to me to be clear because of the following. The Stoics distinguish between clear and distinct impressions, on the one hand, and obscure and confused ones, on the other. They also claim that the wise man will only assent to clear and distinct impressions. But the difference between these two kinds of impressions is not a difference in propositional content. Two people may entertain a thought of the same proposition, e.g. the proposition that two lines which cut lie in the same plane. But the impression which the average person will have when he is asked to entertain this thought will be obscure and confused. The geometer, on the other hand, in thinking that two lines which cut lie in one plane will think of all the relevant properties of lines which cut and of a plane, and it will be because of this that his impression will be clear and distinct, indeed so clear and distinct that it will be obvious to him that two lines which cut lie in one plane.

Now, if the Stoics had thought that judgment and belief were just a matter of assent to a propositional content, it would, indeed, be difficult to see how they could maintain that fear is just a certain kind of judgment. But, given that they think that a judgment also involves a certain way of thinking of a proposition, we can now pursue the possibility that on the Stoic view fear is a matter of the way in which we entertain certain propositions. If assent to the impression that Socrates is going to die is not just the assertion of the proposition that Socrates is going to die, but also involves the acceptance of the way in which one entertains the thought that Socrates is going to die, then perhaps one's fear that Socrates is going to die, after all, is the belief that Socrates is going to die, it now being understood that the belief essentially involves not just a certain propositional content, but also the way this content is thought of.

The reason, or at least the major reason, why thoughts of the same propositional content can differ enormously from each other is that the objects one's thought is a thought of can be represented in one's thought in the most diverse manner without affecting the propositional content of the thought. It is not that the blind man and the seeing person affirm a different proposition when they stand at a traffic crossing and correctly say that the light is on red. But it is likely that the seeing person in his thought represents the colour in a quite different way from the blind person. If one says that a certain book which one is looking at is green one is saying the same thing as one would be saying if one said that this book is green because one knew that all books in this series are green and that hence this book, too, which one had never seen, must be green. But the way this book and its colour are represented in one's thought that the book is green are likely to be quite different.

Now let us assume that two of Socrates' acquaintances, one a friend and one an enemy, agree that Socrates is pale. They assert the same proposition. But one of them, in addition to being a friend of Socrates, also is a doctor. He thinks of Socrates' paleness in a much more distinct way. He also knows from experience that this kind of paleness is the symptom of a fatal disease and represents it accordingly. He thinks of a fatal disease as something bad, because he thinks of death as something bad. All this enters into his thought that Socrates is pale by modifying the way he thinks that Socrates is pale, without though affecting the propositional content. Being told that Socrates is curiously pale, he might respond by saying 'I am afraid that this is so', not to indicate that he is switching the topic and talking about himself now, instead of talking about Socrates, but to indicate that he, too, thinks that Socrates is pale in this curious way, but to also indicate that he thinks in a certain manner of Socrates' being pale in this way, namely a manner which fills him with fear if he assents to, or accepts, the proposition thought in this way. For if, on closer inspection, he decided that Socrates after all did not have the symptomatic paleness there would be no assent and hence no fear. And if he did not think of the symptomatic paleness as a fatal symptom and of death as an evil, and did not assent to the thought thus thought for that reason, there would be no fear either. Hence his fear that Socrates is pale in this way is entirely a matter of his assent to a proposition thought in a certain way and thus depends both on the propositional content and the way this content is thought.

Similarly, if he is afraid that Socrates is going to die his fear is entirely a

matter of his assent to the thought that Socrates is going to die, or the thought that there is some chance that Socrates is going to die, thought of in a certain way. If he did not think in the first place that Socrates was going to die, or that there was some chance that Socrates was going to die, he would not be afraid that Socrates is going to die. But he would not be afraid that Socrates is going to die, either, unless he thought this thought in a certain way, namely by thinking of Socrates' death as an evil, rather than as a blessing, as Socrates' enemy might well do. But, though he may fail to be afraid that Socrates is going to die for either reason, the reason for his fear lies in the way in which he thinks of Socrates' death. To put the matter differently: the doctor has the impression or the thought that Socrates is going to die. It is crucial that this impression or thought is not just characterised by the propositional content that Socrates is going to die, but also by the way this proposition is thought or entertained. Depending on the way it is thought or entertained, there might be, as we say, something frightening or anxiety-producing in the mere thought that Socrates is going to die. But just to have the thought occurring to one is not yet to be afraid that Socrates is going to die. To be afraid that Socrates is going to die is to accept the thought, or the impression, not just in its propositional content, but in the way in which this propositional content is thought.

This seems, indeed, the kind of view the Stoics adopt. For they assume that fears, like all affections of the soul, are excessive impulses, inclinations and disinclinations (Stob. *Ecl.* II, p. 88 10ff. W., *SVF* III 378). And they think of impulses in this way: they assume that among the impressions which we have some are impulsive (the so-called *phantasiai hormētikai*, cf. Stob. *Ecl.* II, p. 85 18W), namely those which are characterised by the fact that if we accept them, if we assent to them, we have a motion or an impulse, an inclination or a disinclination towards something. They insist, though, that the impression is just the antecedent cause of the impulse, the inclination or the disinclination. It, in each case, depends on the mind whether there actually is an impulse, an inclination or a disinclination. For in each case it will depend on the mind whether it gives assent to the impulsive impression, even though it is true that there would be no impulse without an impulsive impression (cf. Seneca *Ep. mor.* 113 18). All these impulses will be judgments. For the impressions which give rise to them, being the impressions of rational beings, will be propositional in character. Hence assent to them will amount to the assertion of a proposition. Nevertheless they will be impulses because of the special impulsive character of the impressions. This character is due to the fact that the impression represents something as to be gone after or to be

avoided. We might have the impression that there is a spring of fresh water. Under the appropriate circumstances we might think of the water as something very appealing. Under these circumstances the mere thought that there is a spring of fresh water, if thought of in this way, might stir us. But it is only when we give assent to the thought thus thought that we desire, are impelled to go after, the water and feel appropriately pleased and satisfied when we have managed to reach it. Similarly the thought that Socrates is going to die may be impulsive if we think of Socrates' death as something to be averted. The mere thought might stir us. But, only when we are moved to accept the thought, will we be afraid and try to avert it, or be sad when Socrates' death no longer is to be averted. But whether we accept it or not, depends on our reason. If it is strong, it will accept only those thoughts which are appropriate, and refuse to accept those which are inappropriate.

Now, there is an appropriate and reasonable way to think about fresh water, death and the like; and one's impulse will depend on the importance one attributes to these things which will be reflected by the way one thinks of them. But, as we saw earlier, the affections are characterised by the fact that their objects are thought of as goods and evils. To think of something as good or evil is to attach to it the highest importance that can be attached to anything and which should only be attached to virtue, since, compared to virtue, nothing else is of any importance. But since people think of the objects of our 'natural' impulses as goods or evils they give assent to the impulsive impressions which represent them as good or bad, and hence feel impelled towards them or away from them, with an intensity which stands in no comparison to their real value, and which hence is excessive. Thus the Stoics can define the affections of the soul as excessive impulses.

In this way, then, we may be able, after all, to make some sense of the fact that the Stoics think they can claim that all our impulses, including the affections of the soul, are judgments of reason, without denying the impulsive or affective character of the affections.

It is easy to see now why the wise man is free from affections. All affections ultimately involve a wrong evaluation of things, the assumption that something is good or evil, when in fact it is neither. But it does not follow from this at all that the wise man has no impulses and emotions at all. In fact, in general he is inclined and disinclined towards the same things towards which we are inclined and disinclined, except that he attaches no particular value to them, and hence also does not particularly care whether he manages to obtain what he is inclined towards and to avoid what he is disinclined towards. For the only thing he really is attached to is

the one thing which actually is good, namely virtue or, what according to the Stoics amounts to the same thing, perfect rationality. So he will be inclined towards something if this is the virtuous or rational thing to be inclined towards. Hence he will represent it in his thought as the rational or virtuous thing to be inclined towards. But it is a confusion to think that something has to be good in order to be the rational or virtuous thing to be inclined towards. The food offered by my hosts may be absolutely indifferent. Nevertheless the thought might occur to me that this is food offered by my hosts, and in this thought the food might be represented as the rational or virtuous thing to be inclined towards. If I were wise I would accept the thought and thus be impelled towards the food. But I would not think that the food was good, nor would it really matter to me whether I got it or not. What would matter to me is that I go for the thing it is virtuous and rational to go for. And this I can achieve, whether I manage to obtain the food which I do not really care for, or not. This is the attitude which, according to the Stoics, the wise man takes towards all the objects of the so-called natural affections, towards the objects of fear and pain, desire and pleasure.

To understand this more fully, something needs to be said about the Stoic account of the genesis of this attitude on the part of the wise man. The Stoics believe that we are born as animals, except that we are constructed in such a way as to become perfectly rational beings, unless the natural process of maturation is interrupted. By nature we are, as children, inclined towards those things which are conducive to our survival as animals; hence we desire them, when we do not have them, and are pleased, when we do obtain them. Similarly we are by nature averse to those things which are detrimental to our survival; we fear them, when they threaten us; we are dissatisfied or pained when we do not manage to avoid them. If all goes well, we learn to avoid what is detrimental and to go after what is wholesome. But as we become rational, a radical change takes place. It is this change which is misdiagnosed by the Peripatetics and the Platonists. They think that the change consists in the fact that the rational part of the soul comes, or at least should come, to exercise its rule over the irrational part of the soul with its natural animal impulses. The fact, according to the Stoics, is that the irrational animal soul of the child has disappeared and turned into a human reason. And with this change the functions of the soul have changed. Thus perception and impulse have become something radically different. Both have become judgments of a certain sort, namely a matter of assent to a certain kind of impression, here a perceptual impression, there an impulsive impression. The child acts on instinctive impulses. It neither has impulsive impressions, nor the

reason to assent to them. For, not having a reason, it also does not have rational impressions, i.e. impressions of essentially propositional form. And hence, *a fortiori*, it does not have impulsive impressions in the sense in which rational beings have such impressions. Conversely, the grown-up, the animal soul having disappeared, does not have any instinctive impulses (though we might be tempted to think so, to avoid responsibility for our impulses). The only way for him to be moved is by assent to impulsive impressions. But impulsive impressions presuppose an evaluation of the objects of our impulses. And at this point ordinary human beings in ordinary human societies can hardly fail to make the mistake which even philosophers like the Platonists and the Peripatetics make. They think that since nature from birth has endowed us with certain natural inclinations and disinclinations the objects of these natural impulses must be goods and evils. Hence their behaviour comes to be motivated, not by instinctive impulses, but by affections of the soul, namely their assent to impulsive impressions in which the objects of the natural inclinations with which we are born are represented as good or bad. But little do they realise that not everything which is conducive to the survival of something, even be it oneself, for that mere reason is good. Nor do they appreciate the fact that the natural instinctive impulses of animals are meant to help them to maintain their existence as animals. But since we no longer are animals, but are rational beings now, it seems even more absurd to think of the things which were of importance for our survival as animals as goods or as evils. What we should now be concerned with is what is conducive or detrimental to our rationality, to our survival as rational beings.

As we become rational we are supposed to realise that there is a natural, rational order of things of which we are just a part, that we from birth have been constructed in such a way as to help to maintain this natural order and to maintain it by means of reason, once we have become rational, and that it is hence the most rational thing for us to do to try as well as we can to maintain this order, since, given that everything is fated, we cannot act against its design anyway. But it is part of the natural order that, other things being equal, beings which need food should obtain it, that beings which are ill should regain their health, and quite generally that beings should obtain what they naturally feel impelled towards. And hence these things, though they are not good, are of some value, insofar as, in general, they are conducive to the maintenance of the general, natural, rational order of things.

Thus the Stoic wise man will, after all, by and large be inclined towards the very things Peripatetics and Platonists regard as goods, but not because he regards them as goods, but because he has realised that these in

general are the rational things to go after, though in any particular case there might be overriding reasons not to go after them. Thus there might be overriding reasons not to continue one's life. Hence the impulses of the Stoic wise man will be directed towards things which he, given his understanding of the order of things, thinks are the rational things to go after. But if he does not obtain what he is impelled towards this will be a very minor loss; a loss, because, other things being equal, the world would be a more reasonable place, if he did obtain what he is impelled towards given that it is not due to any failure on his part that he fails to obtain what he is after; a very minor loss, since the value of what he failed to obtain does not even begin to shift the balance if compared in weightiness to the rationality he maintained in being impelled towards the object he failed to obtain; moreover, the very fact that he did not obtain what he was after, just reveals that in this case other things were not equal, that there were overriding reasons for his lack of success, that the world is a more reasonable place because he failed.

It is for this reason that he can go about things with the proverbial equanimity of a Stoic sage. For it does not really matter to him which way the things he does turn out. For, whether he succeeds or fails, it will be for the best for the world in either case. And since this is what he was aiming at in the first place when he felt impelled towards what he failed to obtain, he succeeds even in his failure.

Thus the Stoic sage does not gain his equanimity by shedding human concerns, but by coming to realise what these concerns are meant to be, and hence what they ought to be, namely the means by which nature maintains its natural, rational order. And we have to realise that in this order our concerns play a very, very subordinate rôle, and are easily overriden by more important considerations, though we may find it difficult to accept this. But it does not follow from the fact that they play a very subordinate rôle, that they play no rôle whatsoever. Nature is provident down to the smallest detail. Hence it must be a caricature of the wise man to think that he has become insensitive to human concerns and only thus manages to achieve his equanimity. Things do move him, but not in such a way as to disturb his balanced judgment and make him attribute an importance to them which they do not have.

Part II
Ethical Foundations and the *Summum Bonum*