Stoic Self-Consciousness

Self-Comprehension and Orientation in the Stoic Theory of *Oikeiosis*

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ABSTRACT: I investigate Stoic accounts of the structure and function of self-consciousness, specifically in connection with the Stoic notion of *Oikeiosis*. After reviewing the tortured history of attempts to translate this ancient notion into modern terms, I set out to determine its content by identifying its inferential role in Stoic moral psychology. I then provide a reconstruction of the Stoic claim that *Oikeiosis* is or involves a form of self-consciousness (Chrysippus), self-sentiment (Seneca), or synæsthesia (Hierocles). I show how the Stoic conception of self-consciousness differs fundamentally from modern accounts of self-consciousness as a form of psychic self-presence or epistemic self-certainty, and I exhibit the limitations of Long's treatment of Stoic self-consciousness as proprioception. Finally, I offer a reconstruction of the Stoic claim that self-consciousness figures as a condition on the possibility of perception and desire, providing a form of normative orientation essential for intentional determinacy.

This paper is offered as a modest contribution towards an alternate history of self-consciousness. Few will dispute that the problems of self-consciousness are among the central themes in modern philosophy. Indeed some will go so far as to say that self-consciousness is *the* theme of modern philosophy *par excellence*. In Descartes and in Kant, to take the two most prominent examples, self-consciousness plays a foundational role both in philosophy and in human existence. For Descartes, self-consciousness is epistemically fundamental: it provides us with a distinctive and indubitable self-knowledge that in turn establishes both the foundation and standard for all scientific knowledge. For Kant, apperceptive self-consciousness is transcendentally fundamental: it serves as the condition on the possibility of all objective representation. Among later thinkers, Fichte cast self-consciousness as a task and an accomplishment; Hegel treats it as the defining *telos* in human history. In recent times, by contrast, self-consciousness has suffered a far less noble fate. In a wide range of 20th century traditions, self-consciousness has been denigrated, demoted or otherwise dismissed from its position, as Kant had it, at the "highest point" of philosophy. The assault has come from almost every direction imaginable. Ryle and Heidegger rejected, from quite different positions but for similar reasons, the idea that self-conscious subjectivity is the hallmark of human existence. Semantic externalism challenged the assumption that individuals have a privileged knowledge of the content of their own thoughts or the meaning of their utterances. Behaviourism, Functional State Identity Theory, and Psychoanalytic Theory each in their own way challenged the traditional assumption that to be in a state of mind is *ipso facto* to know that one is in that state. And countless empirical studies seemed to tell us that we are often quite ignorant as to our own psychological states.

The main outlines of this standard history are by now common currency in philosophy, though certainly the issues that emerged within that history are as contentious as ever. But there is a need, I submit, for an alternate history of self-consciousness – one which neither begins with Descartes nor allows its agenda to be set by the Cartesian construal of self-consciousness and the epistemic issues which took pride of place in his account. A properly thorough alternate history would have to be quite far-reaching. It would require discussions both of the self-conscious shame that figures in Genesis 3:7 and of the ideal of self-knowledge that figured in pre-Socratic Greek religious traditions. It would have to encompass an investigation of self-portraiture, confession, and autobiography alongside the standard discussions of self-identification and self-ascription. Among the philosophers it would need to engage Fichte's claim that self-consciousness is striving and Heidegger's claims about the ontological self-concern constitutive of *Dasein*. And it would have to have something to say about the distinctive forms of self-consciousness so salient at every Junior High School Dance. For my purposes here, however, I will be satisfied if I can contribute to this larger project by recovering elements of a conception of self-consciousness that figured in the ancient Stoic tradition.

My aim here is in the first instance historical: to develop an understanding of how self-consciousness was understood *prior* to the construal that Descartes powerfully crystallized and developed. The self-consciousness that has been so thoroughly attacked in recent times has in the main been self-consciousness as theorized by Descartes: private, inner, psychological, epistemic – a self-certainty about one's own existence and mental states that is somehow independent of and prior to our knowledge of an accordingly 'external' world. But was there perhaps an understanding of self-consciousness already in play before Descartes got to work? And might some such theorization withstand the recent assaults? Allen Wood has recently written that, when it comes to philosophy of mind, "we are all recovering Cartesians – in the same sense that some people are said to be recovering alcoholics."[1] If there is any truth to this, then it may be of some help to know something of how self-consciousness was understood prior to the first appearance of our modern Cartesian addiction.

It is in pursuit of this goal that I undertake in what follows to trace the history of the ancient notion of *Oikeiosis*.[2] *Oikeiosis* is a concept that was made prominent by the ancient Greek Stoics and figured centrally both in their moral psychology and in their ethics. It was held to be a fundamental attribute of human nature, and to function as a condition on the possibility of other human capacities. Most importantly for our purposes, it was understood by a number of ancient writers to be a form of self-consciousness, self-awareness or sentiment of self. Determining exactly what kind of self-

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[1] Wood 2006, 62.

[2] Some notes concerning my treatment of sources is in order here. Except where otherwise indicated, citations to classical sources refer to the editions of the Loeb Classical Library. I shall leave the Greek word *Oikeiosis* untranslated; though I survey below some of the history of attempts to translate it, first into Latin and more recently into English. In order to avoid undue cluttering of the pages, I have not followed the usual practice of using quotation marks to distinguish uses from mentions of this concept; I hope and expect that the difference will in each case be clear from the context. Finally, I have throughout quoted from standard modern English translations of primary sources, both out of a realistic sense of my own qualifications to improve upon the experts, and because the modern translation of ancient concepts is part of what concerns me here. The disadvantage of this policy is a loss of consistency and uniformity in the translation of certain technical terminology. I have tried to compensate for this loss by including key terms from the original texts in square brackets.

consciousness is at work in *Oikeiosis* will present us with a number of philological and philosophical challenges. Some of the difficulties are due to the fragmentary and second-hand nature of the most important sources. But there is a different set of difficulties endemic to any attempt to think about consciousness and self-consciousness across the Cartesian Divide, which has done so much to shape our understanding of the issues. Accordingly my strategy in what follows will be to start from the assumption that we know neither what the Stoics meant by *Oikeiosis* nor what they meant by self-consciousness. It is my hope that in determining the sense of the former we shall learn something about the latter, and that this historical tilling might thereby show a philosophical yield. In particular, I argue that in Stoic *Oikeiosis* we find a genuine alternative to modern conceptions of self-consciousness, yet one that suggests a strategy for defending a claim about self-consciousness that has been challenged in recent discussions: that self-consciousness is a fundamental attribute of human psychology, particularly insofar as it serves a condition on the possibility of perception and action.

I proceed as follows: The first three sections of the paper are devoted to recovering the Stoic construal of *Oikeiosis* and to tackling some of the difficulties it raises. The first of these sections reviews some standard philological information about *Oikeiosis*; the second and third examine its role in two prominent Stoic disputes. Using these resources to fix its content, §4 then addresses the Stoic claims about *Oikeiosis* as a form of self-consciousness; §5 proposes an account of Stoic claims about the role of self-consciousness in desire and perception.

A final word of warning is in order before turning to the matters at hand. Although Stoicism was once celebrated for its broad and systematic approach to philosophy, it is now generally remembered more narrowly as an ethical doctrine. Both in broader traffic in common usage and more narrowly within philosophical discussion, the Stoics are chiefly associated with their provocative ethical teachings: that virtue is the only genuine good and suffices to ensure happiness; that accordingly nothing can harm a good man, who will be 'happy even on the rack'; that pleasure is not a genuine good nor pain a genuine evil; that life is to be lived 'in accordance with nature.' At various junctures below my discussion touches quite closely on Stoic ethical teachings. But I wish to emphasize that my chief concern in what follows is not to assess or defend Stoic ethics, about which I here seek to remain studiously neutral. My aim, rather, is to extract from these Stoic discussions an underlying philosophy of consciousness, and in particular to probe their distinctive construal of the character of self-consciousness.

§1 *Oikeiosis*: A Philological Primer

I start with the basics, with apologies to those for whom this part is old hat. What is *Oikeiosis*? As it happens, almost everything about its interpretation is controversial. Some say it was the basic notion in Stoic ethics; others deny this.[3] Some say it was an idea original to the Stoics; others

[3] For the affirmative claim see Pohlenz 1940 and Pembroke 1971; for the denial see Striker 1983: 165.

insist it was derivative.[4] To some it marks a decisive step away from a persistent moral failing in ancient ethics; others argue that it was a dangerous and absurd doctrine.[5] To get a preliminary bead both on the concept and some of the attendant difficulties of interpretation, it may be worth beginning with a selective survey of the history of its translation. When Cicero set out to translate Greek philosophy into Latin (a process Heidegger later described as 'fateful for Western ontology') he rendered the Greek term with a pair of Latin words: *conciliatio et commendatio*.[6] Centuries later Grotius preferred to leave the Greek term untranslated, but explained it in Latin as *appetites societatis* – a desire for society.[7] In the 19th century William Whewell translated *Oikeiosis* as *the domestic instinct*, bringing out the connection to the Greek root *oikos*: a house or dwelling.[8] Among recent classical scholars there has been an array of proposed translations: Long uses *appropriation* but also at times resorts to *love*; Annas prefers *familiarization*; Schofield uses *affinity*.[9] Pembroke leaves the term untranslated but glosses the term as *well-disposedness*.[10] One standard modern translation of Greek Stoic sources deploys a range of terms: *affection, endearment*, and *being-near-and-dea*r.[11] Both the lack of any settled translation and the diversity of these proposals provides us with a first hint that the term may not be easy to appropriate directly into an idiom shaped by modern assumptions – although even this claim has been challenged in the literature.[12]

In the face of the difficulties occasioned by this unfamiliarity and lack of consensus, my main approach here will be to resort to what is nowadays known as inferentialist semantics. We can fix the content of a concept, according to this approach, by uncovering its inferential role. What considerations are used in justifying the application of the concept? What does the invocation of *Oikeiosis* entail? What role does it play in Stoic arguments and proofs? If we can identify the inferential patterns in which the Stoics themselves deployed the notion then we shall be well on our way towards understanding it for ourselves. Fortunately for this inferentialist approach, the Stoics were notoriously disputatious philosophers, and moreover were constantly defending their philosophical views in the face of a sustained barrage of criticism from rival schools. So there is no shortage of inferences to examine. In the sections that follow I consider two such inferential contexts in which the notion of *Oikeiosis* occurs, the first pertaining to Stoic cosmopolitanism in ethics, the second to the Stoic theory of motivation and agency. Before turning to these disputes, however, we will do well to supplement our inferentialism with a somewhat more conventional philological approach.

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[4] von Armin 1926 argues that the Stoics borrowed the notion from the Peripatetic school; the Stoic claim to originality is vigorously defended in Pohlenz 1940. For a more qualified defense see Brink 1956.
[5] For a sampling of this debate see Pangle 1998 and Padgen 2000.
[6] Cicero, *de Finibus* III, 16. Hicks translates this phrase as "attachment and affection". More literally one might say "a bringing together and recommendation." Cicero's rendering has recently been echoed by Irwin, who translates *Oikeiosis* as "conciliation" (Irwin 2003, 252).
[7] Grotius 1625, 6.
[8] Whewell, William 1853, xxiv.
[9] Long and Sedley 1987, 1:351; Long 2003, 385; Annas 1992, 56-57; Schofield 2003, 243.
[10] Pembroke 1971, 116.
[11] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, translation by R.D. Hicks (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, 1925, 1931).
[12] See Pembroke 1971, 114: "*Oikeiosis* does not need bringing up to date."

According to the Lexicon, *Oikeiosis* is to be defined as "a taking as one's own, appropriation."[13] It derives from the root *Oikos*, meaning house or dwelling – the same Greek root as in the more familiar modern word, 'economics' (literally: the law of the household). S.G. Pembroke provides a useful set of notes on the grammar and history of the term:

> The verb *oikeioun*, which is transitive, turns up in various forms in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. meaning to appropriate goods or, when applied to people, to win them over – the object of official diplomacy as well as of private intrigue. … [T]he noun *oikeiosis* is used in this sense by Thucydides. … *Oikeios*, to go back to the adjective, is regularly contrasted with *allotrios*, what belongs to someone else or is in wider sense alien to oneself[.][14]

Pembroke's final comment here will be particularly useful to us in what follows, and already amounts to a first data point in our hunt for inferential patterns. For while the term *Oikeiosis* may nowadays be unfamiliar, its traditional opposite is not. *Oikeiosis* is the opposite of *allotriosis*, the Greek term for alienation. As in modern English, these terms have an original economic sense: one alienates a piece of property by selling it, and one appropriates it when one makes it one's own. But as we shall see, these opposed economic terms come to have an extended application in both ethics and psychology.

The early history of the use of *Oikeiosis* in philosophy is uncertain and disputed, but most scholars credit its introduction specifically to the Stoics. The word is absent from the extant writings of Plato and Aristotle, but it can be traced at least to the writings of Chrysippus (c. 282-206 B.C.). Chrysippus was the third leader of the Stoic School (after Zeno of Citium and Cleanthes) and by many accounts was the master theoretician of the Greek Stoic tradition. Almost all of Chrysippus' writings have been lost, but in the VIIth book of *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, Diogenes claims to quote directly from his book *On Ends*. I quote the relevant passage in full, following Hicks' translation:

> An animal's first impulse, say the Stoics, is to self-preservation, because nature from the outset endears [*oikeiouses*] it to itself , as Chrysippus affirms in the first book of his work, *On Ends*: his words are, "The dearest thing [*proton oikeion*] to every animal is its own constitution and its consciousness thereof"; for it was not likely that nature should estrange the living thing from itself or that she should leave the creature she has made without either estrangement from [*allotriosai*] or affection for [*oikeiosai*] its own constitution. We are forced then to conclude that nature in constituting the animal made it near and dear to itself [*oikeiothai pro eauto*]; for so it comes to repel all that is injurious and give free access to all that is serviceable or akin to it [*ta oikeia*].[15]

Both in the direct quote from Chrysippus and in the attendant commentary from Diogenes we can see the basic outlines of the doctrine of *Oikeiosis*. As presented here it combines cosmological and psychological commitments. The cosmological doctrine involves a view of animals as the products of nature (*physis*) which is itself conceived to be a unified and rational creative force. The basic psychological doctrine is a form of what we would now call psychological egoism: animals (including humans) are said to be endowed with an innate impulse or instinct (the Greek is *horme*, root of the modern biological term, 'hormone') toward self-preservation. Hence whenever an infant suckles at a

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[13] Liddel and Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford, 1889, 1992), 545.
[14] Pembroke 1971, 115.
[15] Diogenes Laertius. *Lives* VII, 85; translation by R.D. Hicks. Plutarch reports a similar claim as appearing in Book I of Chrysippus' lost book, *On Justice*; see Plutarch, *On Stoic Self-Contradictions* 12, 1038c.

nipple or a turtle struggles to right itself (two of the stock examples) Stoics see *Oikeiosis* at work: a rational natural order is so constituted to ensure that animals are immediately drawn toward what serves and preserves them.

Two features of this early treatment of the doctrine deserve comment. First, although I have been talking so far of this whole complex of claims as the Stoic doctrine of *Oikeiosis*, it is worth taking note of the particular ways in which the term (and its grammatical relatives) figure in the articulation of the theory. The concept enters first in stating the relationship that nature establishes between an animal and itself, or more specifically between an animal and its constitution [*sustasis*]. In Hicks' translation this is said to be a relationship of endearment [*oikeioses*], and the animal's constitution is said to be 'the dearest thing' [*proton oikeion*]. With an ear for the etymological origins we might think of this as the animal being innately 'at home' in its own body. In keeping with the inferential pattern already noted, this preestablished 'endearment' is here contrasted with a state of alienation or estrangement [*allotriosai*]. Notice, however, that the *Oikeiosis* said to be manifested in an animal's self-concern immediately reappears in its relations to various objects and states in its environment. Some of these objects are now encountered as *ta oikeia*: things that are 'appropriate' (or 'serviceable and akin', as Hicks has it) to the animal's preservation.[16] These are contrasted to those that are injurious or in some way threaten harm. *Oikeiosis* in this way begins as a self-relation but immediately broadens to inform and structure the animal's experience of the objects around it.

The second point to note here is that Chrysippus' doctrine involves an appeal to some sort of self-consciousness or self-understanding. This thought is already to be found in that portion of the passage that Diogenes claims to derive directly from his source. In Hicks' rendering: what is dear to the animal is both the animals own constitution *and its consciousness thereof.*[17] We must take care not to interpret this claim prematurely. The Greek term is *syneidesin*, which we might transliterate as 'occurring with ideas.' Hicks' translation can certainly be justified on etymological grounds; the Latin roots '*con-scio*' literally mean 'with-knowing', and hence echo the etymology of the Greek. But we must here check our tendency to import anachronistic preconceptions about what this consciousness amounts to. For now we can simply note that already among the earliest statements of the *Oikeiosis* doctrine it is associated with some kind of self-awareness or self-understanding. It is also worth noting that we here encounter a second Greek term that is absent from the Platonic and Aristotelian corpus. It is found, however, in the Greek of the New Testament and the early Christian church, where it is standardly translated as "conscience."[18]

One final point is worth adding before turning to the Stoic deployment of *Oikeiosis* in disputes and proofs. At least since later Greek antiquity, and quite probably earlier as well, the doctrine of

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[16] Elsewhere Hicks renders this important phrase with the rather obscure medical term *aliments*: that which nourishes or feeds.

[17] Long and Sedley render this sentence as follows: "The first thing appropriate [*proton oikeion*] to every animal … is its own constitution and the consciousness of this." Long and Sedley 1987, 1:346.

[18] The term occurs quite regularly in the Pauline epistles. A particularly important example comes in Romans 2:15: "They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, to which their own conscience [*syneideseos*] also bears witness … ." I am grateful to David McNeill for his assistance in researching this textual history.

Oikeiosis has been associated with an image: that of a set of concentric circles.[19] In some recent discussions the circles have been associated specifically with what is distinguished as "social *Oikeiosis*" as opposed to "individual *Oikeiosis*",[20] but there is reason to believe that these are best understood as two aspects of a single unified view. The central circle is identified with the individual, with progressively broader circles marking the domains of the immediate family, household, city and so on. The broadest circle is associated with the whole of humanity, or of rational beings in total. The image of the circles requires interpretation, but it suggests that *Oikeiosis* is not to be understood simply as a psychological state or disposition but as a process. As a pebble dropped in water creates a spreading set of circles, so in psychological maturation the self-concern at work in *Oikeiosis* tends systematically to broaden its scope to encompass not just the individual but a progressively larger domain of those around him. We have just seen one example of this broadening in the transfer of *Oikeiosis* from an animal's self-concern to a concern with objects in the immediate environment. As we shall see presently, the Stoics also made a much more contentious claim about the form this broadening takes in specifically human maturation.

§2 *Oikeiosis* and Stoic Cosmopolitanism

I turn now to consider the role played by *Oikeiosis* in two important Stoic arguments. In neither case will I undertake a thorough-going interpretation and assessment of these arguments, each of which raise a number of thorny issues in ethics and psychology; my aim is rather to advance our understanding of Stoic *Oikeiosis* by considering its purported inferential significance. The first of the two arguments concerns the Stoics' distinctive commitment to cosmopolitanism. The term "cosmopolitan" is said to derive from a saying of the Cynic Diogenes; when asked where he was from he reportedly would answer: "I am a citizen of the world [*kosmopolites*]."[21] But it was the Stoics, among the ancient schools, who did most to promote the cosmopolitan ideal. A passage from Plutarch's book on Alexander the Great exhibits key elements of Stoic position.

> The much admired *Republic* of Zeno ... is aimed at this main point, that our household arrangements should not be based on cities or parishes, each one marked out by its own legal system, but we should regard all men as our fellow citizens and local residents, and there should be one way of life and order, like that of a herd grazing together and nurtured by a common law. Zeno wrote this, picturing as it were, a dream or image of a philosopher's well regulated society.[22]

It is worth distinguishing two dimensions of ethical universalism in the position Plutarch attributes to Zeno. The first is universalism in the scope of moral theory. That is, it is an answer to the question: "To whom, exactly, do our ethical standards apply?" Here Zeno's answer seems to be: *everyone*. He

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[19] On Hierocles use of the image, see below. Cicero uses the image at *de Officiis* (I, 54), a text which is known to have exercised considerable influence on Kant. The image of the circles became common in Enlightenment discussions of sympathy.
[20] See in particular Julia Annas's edition of Cicero's *de Finibus* (Cambridge, 2001), 69n7.
[21] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* VI, 63
[22] Plutarch, *On the Fortune of Alexander 329A-B*

envisions a single, universal legal code -- a "common law" for all -- encompassing not only all "cities and parishes" but every caste and rank within society as well. The most prominent ancient Stoics famously included an emperor (Marcus Aurelius) and a slave (Epictetus) and Stoic moral teachings purport to provide rules of conduct equally suited to both.

This first dimension of universalism in Stoic moral theory was to exercise considerable influence on later ethical traditions (starting already with early Christianity), and it certainly marked a break from the ethical systems that prescribed rules of conduct only for those of a particular faith or community. But among the ancient philosophical schools this alone cannot be said to mark a fundamental break, even if it was given new emphasis and prominence by the Stoics. For in retrospect we can recognize elements of this sort of ethical universalism in the positions of Plato and Aristotle, particularly insofar as their ethical theories were rooted firmly in accounts of human (as opposed to narrowly Greek or Athenian) psychology. Nonetheless, there is no denying that there were crucial limitations of scope in pre-Stoic Greek ethics (Aristotle's account of slavery being the most notorious example), so the Stoics could rightly claim to have advanced a universalism that was at most incipient in earlier moral theory.

But Stoic cosmopolitanism also made a more radical break – and occasioned much more controversy – with a second claim to universality. In Plutarch's report we see this second form of universalism at work in the claim that "we should regard all men as our fellow citizens and local residents." Here the question is not only one about the scope of our ethical *theory*; it is an issue about the scope of our ethical *commitments*. In contrast to virtually all earlier moral traditions, which assumed that the sphere of justice was delimited (whether to one's family, one's tribe, one's co-religionists, one's city, or to those with whom one had some direct contact), the Stoics held that the sphere of moral concern must in the limiting case extend to all rational beings. As Plutarch was writing, this 'philosopher's dream' was already implicated in the emergence of ancient imperialism, first in its Greek and then much more systematically in its Roman manifestations. But at its core lay a novel and controversial ethical ideal.

Stoic Cosmopolitanism has received considerable attention in recent years, in no small part because Cosmopolitanism itself has been an intensely disputed ideal in recent times.[23] But what matters for my purposes here is the role played in motivating it by the doctrine of *Oikeiosis*. An excerpt from Hierocles in Stobaeus' anthology will help bring out the connection. Hierocles begins with an invocation of the image of concentric circles, here elaborated in considerable detail:

> Each one of us is as it were entirely encompassed by many circles, some smaller, others larger, the latter enclosing the former on the basis of their different and unequal dispositions relative to each other. The first and closest circle is the one which a person has drawn as though around a centre, his own mind. This circle encloses the body and anything taken for the sake of the body. For it is virtually the smallest circle, and almost touches the centre itself. Next, the second one further removed from the centre but enclosing the first circle; this contains parents, siblings, wife, and children. The third one has in it uncles and aunts, grandparents, nephews, nieces, and cousins. The next circle includes the other relatives, and this is followed

[23] See *inter alia*, Nussbaum 1997 and 2000, Prangle 1998, Padgen 2000, Hill 2000, Berges 2005.

> by the circle of local residents, then the circle of fellow-tribesmen, next that of fellow citizens, and then in the same way the circle of people from neighboring towns, and the circle of fellow-countrymen. The outermost and largest circle, which encompasses all the rest, is that of the whole human race.[24]

The very structure of Hierocles' image might already be taken to suggest a step toward cosmopolitanism, insofar as it involves situating the local community in relationship to the whole of humanity in the same sort of relationship that holds, e.g., between a family and the city of which it forms a part. This implicit cosmopolitan orientation soon becomes explicit in the form of a ethical prescription:

> Once all these [circles] have been surveyed, it is the task of a well tempered man, in his proper treatment of each group, to draw the circles together somehow toward the center, and to keep zealously transferring those from the enclosing circles into the enclosed ones. [ibid.]

Among other things, Hierocles' fragment exhibits some of the distinctive texture of Stoic cosmopolitanism. Hierocles, at least, does not seem to envision a kind of flat moral universalism, in which my obligations to those distant in time and space somehow equals (or ultimately overshadows) the special commitments I have to those in my family, or my village, or my academic community. Nor does Hierocles rule out the possibility that Plutarch's Zeno seems to exclude, namely that my deliberations might in some important sense be "based at home." The picture Hierocles offers is one where the distinction between near and far is still relevant to my deliberations; his point is that the scope of what is ethically relevant is universal, and that I have an obligation to "draw nearer" those who start out far away. Hierocles even specifies just how much closer the distant should be brought.

> It is incumbent upon us to respect people from the third circle as if they were those from the second, and again to respect our other relatives as if they were those from the third circle. … The right point will be reached if, through our own initiative, we reduce the distance of the relationship with each person. [ibid.]

This feature of Hierocles' cosmopolitanism has been overlooked by some influential recent commentators, who have tended to treat all Stoic cosmopolitanism on the model of the position attributed to Zeno.[25]

What does all this have to do with *Oikeiosis*? The answer should initially surprise us. Up to this point we have located the core of the *Oikeiosis* doctrine in a form of psychological egoism, but in the debate over cosmopolitanism the concept is used to justify a very robust account of the demands of justice. How could a form of self-interest or self-concern serve as the basis for such an expansive and unprecedented ethical demand? It is crucial to see that the Stoics' answer is *not* a precursor of the standard modern social contract approach, imagining a group of self-interested individuals bargaining over the rules for a just society. Rather, their position seems to be that cosmopolitan concern is the final stage in the process of *Oikeiosis*, as the self-concern already at work in the infant systematically

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[24] Hierocles, fragment excerpted in Stobaeus' *Eclogae* IV, 671ff; Long and Sedley 1987, 1:349.

[25] See in particular Nussbaum 1997, 7: "This being so, Stoic cosmopolitans hold, we should regard our deliberations as, first and foremost, deliberations about human problems of people in particular concrete situations, not problems growing out of a local or national identity that confines and limits our moral aspirations." This may be true of the position reported by Plutarch, but Hierocles seems explicitly to allow for a form of cosmopolitan deliberation that "grows out of a local … identity," and even, by the specified degree, "limits our moral aspirations."

expands as part of the natural process of maturation. This would seem to be a difficult claim to sustain, given the prevalence of xenophobia and other forms of parochialism in human existence as we actually observe it. But the Stoics held that such limitation of ethical perspective is properly understood as resulting from a disruption or corruption of the natural process whereby one's sphere of concern grows progressively wider. Only in the Sage, perhaps, does it reach its widest and most fully developed extent, but that breadth of moral concern is the natural outcome of a natural process; it should therefore orient us in the cultivation of our moral instincts and capacities for deliberation, and even (if one happens to be a Stoic emperor) in one's political and military endeavors.

Like almost every Stoic teaching, this claim about the foundations of justice has been subject to severe criticism, both by ancient and modern critics, and it is easy to see that it is beset by a number of serious difficulties. In the ancient world this was thought to be another of those repugnant Stoic paradoxes, and was widely held to be just as preposterous as the claim that, e.g., health does not contribute to happiness. The idea that one might care equally for a Greek and "the most distant Mysian" struck many of the critics of Stoicism as not only straightforwardly false but also pernicious. After all, to abolish the idea that members of my family (or my fellow citizens or my academic colleagues …) have special claims upon my action would effectively be to abolish the family (and the state and academies …) as morally significant institutions. And this was rightly seen as quite antithetical to justice. It is in one such refutation – this from a late skeptical textbook only recently recovered – that we find one of the clearest statements of the inferential role of *Oikeiosis* in the Stoic cosmopolitan argument.

> We have an appropriate relationship to members of the same species. But a man's relationship to his own citizens is more appropriate. For appropriation varies in its intensification. So [as regards] those people [the Stoics] who derive justice from appropriation: if on the one hand they are saying that a man's appropriation to himself is equal to his appropriation in relation to the most distant Mysian, their assumption preserves justice; on the other hand, no one agrees with them that the appropriation is equal. That is contrary to plain fact and one's self-awareness. … If on the other hand they themselves should say that appropriation can be intensified, we may grant the existence of philanthropy, but the situations of two shipwrecked sailors will refute them.[26]

Notice that variants of the term *Oikeiosis* (appropriation) occur eight times in this densely argumentative fragment. The unknown skeptical author explicitly names the inferential pattern we have been discussing: the Stoics claim to "derive justice from *Oikeiosis*." But this derivation falters, according to the critic. The Stoics claim that *Oikeiosis* generates a concern that extends to the whole of humanity, but such a kinship is said to be insufficient to 'preserve justice.' The refutation turns on a dilemma concerning variability in *Oikeiosis*. If the strength of species-wide *Oikeiosis* is held to be strictly equivalent to that of narrowly self-directed *Oikeiosis*, then the Stoic psychological thesis is "contrary to plain fact." But if even the slightest degree of variation is admitted then a conception of justice derived from *Oikeiosis* has morally objectionable consequences and fails in its claim to warrant a cosmopolitan ethic. The explication of the argument is not fully spelled out in the portion of the text

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[26] *Commentary on Plato's Theaetetus*, 5.18-6.31; Long and Sedley 1987, 1:350.

that has survived, but it is not hard to extrapolate the "case of the shipwrecked sailors" which is meant to press it. Philanthropy may indeed be natural, but the circumstances of justice make themselves felt precisely in those situations where the self-interest of one agent comes into conflict with the interests of others. If two sailors are clinging to a timber that suffices only for keeping one afloat, then one or the other will have to drown. But if one's natural concern for one's own preservation is greater by even the smallest fraction than one's concern for the wellbeing of others then Stoic justice would seem to require that one always chooses self-preservation at the expense of others in such circumstances.[27]

It is certainly tempting to propose a Stoic reply to this criticism, but at this point I forego further descent into the dialectic. For we have gone far enough to extract what we need concerning the inferential role of the concept at work here. Summing up what we have learned so far we can conclude at least this much: *Oikeiosis* is a foundational concept in Stoic psychology and ethics.[28] It is held to be a psychological fact of direct ethical significance. *Oikeiosis* underlies and explains an organism's innate concern for its own preservation, but it also expands to incorporate more and more within its appropriated domain. In this sense it involves both a relation (to oneself and to things in one's environment) and a process (whereby the sphere of concern expands). Unless interrupted *Oikeiosis* can progressively expand to incorporate the whole human domain. From the outset it provides normative guidance in action, informing an appreciation for the difference between harmful and beneficial endeavors. It involves a distinctive form of 'being-at-home' or familiarity (as contrasted to a state of alienation or estrangement) with oneself and with one's environment. And it is used to motivate a form of cosmopolitanism in which one is held to be properly 'at home' in the human sphere as a whole.

§3 *Oikeiosis*, Pleasure and Desire

I turn now to a second Stoic argument, and at the same time from Greek to Roman Stoic sources. Our source in this instance is Cicero's *de Finibus*; the argument emerges in the context of Stoic attempts to refute Epicurean moral psychology. This dispute is of considerable interest in its own right, but it will also bring into sharper view an important further dimension of *Oikeiosis* – what one might even call its proto-transcendental role -- and it will bring us into closer proximity to the Stoic conception of *Oikeiosis* as involving a form of self-consciousness.

Cicero himself was not a Stoic; indeed he was among the fiercest critics of Stoic teachings. Nonetheless his account of Stoic doctrine in *de Finibus* remains one of the most complete extant statements of Stoic moral philosophy, and it seems to have been composed with the benefit of direct knowledge of a number of Greek Stoic sources that have now been lost. Its importance also derives from the fact that in it Cicero systematically and quite deliberately undertakes the task of rendering

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[27] This line of criticism seems to have been pioneered by Carneades. For an analysis see Striker 1991, 50-61.
[28] This claim has been challenged in Striker 1983, but her thesis is carefully qualified. Striker does not dispute the attribution of this cosmopolitan argument to the Stoics, with the appeal to *Oikeiosis* serving as a premise. Her contention is that the appeal to *Oikeiosis* does not serve as the basis for the more fundamental ethical claims that the life lived in accordance with nature is the virtuous life, and that virtue is sufficient to happiness.

Greek philosophical terminology in Latin. *De Finibus* is constructed as a series of dialogues in which the teachings of each of the predominant Hellenistic schools (Epicureanism, Stoicism, Skepticism) are systematically expounded and assessed. Books III and IV are devoted to Stoic teachings, with Cato in the role of enthusiastic expounder of Stoicism while Cicero himself acts first as cooperative audience and then as vehement critic. The third book contains Cato's exposition of Stoicism; Book IV develops Cicero's refutation.

The context in which the doctrine of *Oikeiosis* first appears in *de Finibus* is significant. Book III opens with some stage-setting and unsystematic sparring about Stoic doctrines, particularly as regards Stoic claims to originality and regarding the core Stoic claim that virtue is sufficient to happiness. However, Cato soon proposes that a more systematic exposition is required – a proposal to which his interlocutor readily agrees. The narrative voice says simply "He began," and there follows Cato's statement, now in Ciceronian Latin, of Stoic theory. I recount the dramatic set-up because it bears directly upon our topic; for the very first concept Cato introduces is the notion of *Oikeiosis*:

> [Cato:] It is the view of those whose system I adopt that immediately upon birth (for that is the proper point to start from) a living creature feels an attachment to itself, and an impulse to preserve itself and to feel affection for its own constitution and for those things which tend to preserve that constitution; while on the other hand it conceives an antipathy to destruction and to those things which appear to threaten destruction.[29]

So far this is familiar territory; indeed it is effectively a reiteration of the doctrine Diogenes had reported from Chrysippus, albeit now translated into a new Latin vocabulary. *Oikeiosis* is here rendered with the elaborate phrase: *sibi conciliari et commendari ad se conservandum* -- an impulse to preserve itself and to feel affection for its own constitution. And what in the Greek had been simply "*ta oikeia*" is here 'things which tend to preserve one's constitution.' [*suum statum eaque quae conservantia sunt eius status*]. There may seem to be a difference in the scope of the thesis: Chrysippus had applied it to animals but the text here refers to 'all living creatures'. But this is an artifact of Rackham's translation; the Latin is simply '*animal'*. Certainly the core claim as to the innateness of the principle remains the central emphasis.

But as Cato's exposition proceeds we encounter a deployment of *Oikeiosis* in an inferential context that we have not yet considered. Having stated the Stoic doctrine, Cato immediately sets out to justify it.

> In proof of this opinion they urge that infants desire things conducive to their health and reject things that are the opposite before they have ever felt pleasure or pain; this would not be the case, unless they felt an affection for their own constitution and were afraid of destruction. But it would be impossible that they should feel desire at all unless they possessed self-consciousness, and consequently felt affection for themselves. This leads to the conclusion that it is love of self which supplies the primary impulse to action. [ibid.]

Cato's proposed proof is tantalizing but also frustratingly underdeveloped; Long has called it "an argument of lightening brevity."[30] The first thing to note is its dialectical context. Cato sets out to

[29] Cicero, *de Finibus* III, 16.
[30] Long 1993, 254.

prove his thesis not from first principles but in a kind of determinate negation of its main contemporary rival. That rival, of course, is the core thesis of Epicurean psychology: the claim that the overarching motive in human endeavor is the desire for pleasure. Cato tackles this claim in the context of what Brunschwig has called "cradle arguments" – the disputes between the two schools as to the psychological traits of newborns, whom Epicurus himself had famously described as "mirrors of nature."[31]

How is Cato's proof to be reconstructed? The answer is far from clear. At least part of the argument seems to turn on what we would now call an empirical claim. In his attempt to forestall the Epicurean claim that we are all born pleasure-seekers, Cato seems to deny that newborn infants experience pleasure or pain. This is, to say the least, a surprising claim by modern lights, and it is tempting to dismiss it as a historically revealing but philosophically uninteresting artifact of ancient attitudes about babies. But this would be to miss something important. Notice first that Cato's denial of newborn pain and pleasure is framed in a comparison: prior to the experience of pleasure or pain comes "the desire for things conducive to their health." This may not be enough to win us over to Cato's neonatological thesis, but we should not mistake it for an image of newborns as somehow less-than-fully alive. On the contrary, newborns in Cato's account are already quite sophisticated agents.

Elements of Cato's reasoning come into focus when read in light of an image found in the Greek Stoic sources: the image of pleasure as a flower or bloom which makes its appearance only after an organism has satisfied its needs. The infant, to take up the lead from this metaphor, would never have the good fortune to experience pleasure unless it was endowed with a disposition which leads it to fulfill the vital needs from whose satisfaction pleasure 'blooms'. The contention against Epicureans is that a nested set of psychological conditions must already be in place before pleasure can be encountered and found desirable. The basic condition, already immediately at work in the newborn, is the feeling of affection for and implicit understanding of the organism's own constitution and what preserves it. This is the core state of *Oikeiosis*. This state manifests itself in the infant's disposition to seek things conducive to its health and to eschew the opposite. It is only as an effect of all this that the infant comes to feel pleasure -- as an outcome of a causal sequence made possible by this underlying state. Hence the surprising thesis: infants do not experience pleasure *ab initio*, but encounter it only as a pleasurable downstream effect of a prior motivational condition. In the case of infants this whole process may unfold very quickly, as the first instincts very quickly produce the first pleasures. But the key point for Cato is that the instinct must come first, with the pleasure to follow only as its dependent effect. A version of this line of argument can be found in Diogenes, and it is in close keeping with Cicero's own attack on Epicurean psychology in *de Finibus* II.[32]

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[31] Brunschwig 1986.
[32] For a Greek statement of this argument see Diogenes *Lives,* VII, 86: "As for the assertion made by some people that pleasure is the object to which the first impulse of animals is directed, it is shown by the Stoics to be false. For pleasure, if it is really felt, they declare to be a by-product, which never comes until nature by itself has sought and found the means suitable to the animal's existence or constitution; it is an aftermath comparable to the condition of animals thriving and plants in full bloom." Cicero's rejection of Epicurean hedonism about infants is stated as follows: "In fact the young are not moved by nature to seek pleasure but simply to love themselves and to keep themselves safe and sound. Every living creature, as soon as it is born, loves both itself and all its parts. It

We have not yet taken the full measure of Cato's proof, to which we shall return below. But it is worth pausing to take stock. I do not take a stand here as to whether the argument we have extracted so far suffices as a refutation of Epicurean cradle arguments, though I do think that it raises a challenge to be taken seriously. But what our reconstruction does exhibit is an important further dimension to the Stoic notion of *Oikeiosis*. To this point we have characterized *Oikeiosis* as a motive, as a relation, and as a process; what we now see is that *Oikeiosis* also serves, according to the Stoics, as a condition on other psychological states. This role for *Oikeiosis* receives its most forceful statement in the penultimate claim in Cato's proof: "it would be impossible that they should feel desire at all unless they possessed self-consciousness, and consequently felt affection for themselves." Cato's initial claim had been that *Oikeiosis* must be in place in order for pleasure to occur; here he claims that *Oikeiosis* is the condition on the very possibility of desiring anything at all. With these claims the final element of the inferential role of *Oikeiosis* comes into view. *Oikeiosis* is held to involve some kind of self-consciousness or self-awareness (*sensum sui*) that is a condition on the possibility of desire and is sufficient to ensure self-love.

I shall not yet attempt an interpretation of this puzzling claim; certainly the text provides far less than one might hope by way of explanation or defense of it. But we should take note of the considerable open water that separates Cato's claim from later assumptions about self-consciousness and desire. We tend to think of desire (or appetite – the Latin noun here is *appetitio*; Annas' translation renders it as 'seeking out') as a relatively primitive psychological condition, widely shared in the animal world. Self-consciousness, by contrast, we tend to think of as a much higher-order cognitive achievement, perhaps as the exclusive privilege (or curse?) of human nature, or at most shared only with a few other intelligent mammals. From this modern perspective, Cato's thesis is simply unintelligible. How could the higher order psychological accomplishment serve as the condition on the possibility of the lower order capacity?

§4 Seneca on Animal Self-Consciousness

In our encounters with the Stoic notion of *Oikeiosis* we have found it to be developed in close connection with claims about self-consciousness or self-awareness – *syneidesin* in Chrysippus, *sensum sui* in Cicero. Having developed a firmer grip on the concept of *Oikeiosis* itself, we can now begin to tackle this issue directly. What kind of self-consciousness did the Stoics hold to be at work in *Oikeiosis*? In a recent discussion of this question, Long has argued that Stoic self-consciousness is aptly understood in terms of the modern notion of proprioception, the quasi-perceptual awareness an organism has of the bearing of its own body.[33] There are some obvious advantages to this line of

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cherishes above all its two major components, namely mind and body, and then the parts of each, Both mind and body possess certain excellences. At first these are dimly perceived, then incipiently distinguished, with the result that nature's primary attributes are sought and the contraries rejected." Cicero, *de Finibus* II, 33; Annas translation.

[33] Long 1993.

interpretation: it renders somewhat more palatable the otherwise surprising claim that self-consciousness is present in all animals; and it provides the distinctive form of legitimacy that comes of finding a respectable modern equivalent for an ancient doctrine. But while Long's thesis is not all-wrong, it is not all right either. Or so I shall argue here. To make out this case I turn to a relatively late Stoic source: the letters of Seneca. Seneca's Stoicism is far less systematic than that we find articulated in Cicero or even in the fragments from Stobaeus. (The dust jackets of the Loeb edition describe his writings as "more clever than profound".) But for our purposes he is a crucial figure, because he provides the most direct and extensive consideration of the Stoic thesis that *Oikeiosis* is or involves self-consciousness.

By tradition, Seneca's 121st letter to Lucilius carries the title, "On Instinct in Animals", although in Seneca's original it bears only the heading: "*Seneca Lvcilio svo salvtem*." Seneca's letters take many forms: some are meditations, some exhortations to Lucilius on some moral matter or another, a few take the form of abstract philosophical expositions. But the letter on instinct recounts and revisits a dispute. After two paragraphs of preliminaries, the disputed thesis comes out into the open: "*We were once debating whether all animals had any feelings about their constitution*."[34] Seneca himself describes this as a 'little question' [*quaestiunculam*], in contrast to the correspondingly large ethical questions over which Lucilius has reportedly been pressing him ("Prove to me that felicity is fickle and empty"; "How can I crave less and fear less?" …). But Seneca also hints that this little question may be of considerable significance, pertaining to "the nature and origin of character."

Seneca's own answer to the disputed 'little question' is clearly affirmative and is stated explicitly at the outset of the fourth paragraph: "*So all these animals have a consciousness of their physical constitution* … ."[35] The precise scope of this claim is not entirely clear, but over the course of the letter Seneca discusses cats, hawks, chickens, peacocks, turtles, bees and spiders, including thereby not only mammals, birds, reptiles and insects but both some animals long celebrated for their intelligence and others notorious for their stupidity. In the main body of the letter Seneca defends his thesis, first by proposing a positive proof, then with replies to a series of objections. The positive proof is grounded in observations about the behavior of animals. The three replies in turn dispatch an Epicurean explanation of the same phenomenon, reply to the charge that Stoics have over-intellectualized animal and child behavior, and deal with a challenge pertaining to personal identity over time.

To modern ears, Seneca's arguments curiously combine prescient scientific hypothesis and striking *non sequitur*. In his reply to the Epicureans, Seneca argues forcefully and resourcefully

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[34] Seneca, *Epistles* 121, 5; emphasis added. I'm not entirely happy with Gummere's translation. Here is the Latin: "*Quaerebamus, an esset omnibus animalibus constitutionis suae sensus?*" More literally: "We were asking whether every animal has a sense for its constitution."

[35] "*Ergo omnibus constitutionis suae sensus est* … ." Seneca, *Epistles* 121, 9; emphasis added. It is worth registering an observation about the syntax of Seneca's "*sensus*," which I find myself hard-pressed to explain. Gummere's translation has Seneca asking whether animals "have a feeling" and answering that they "have a consciousness." The noun is the same in both cases: *sensus*. But Seneca's verb in each case is a form of *esse*, to be. So it would it perhaps be a bit more literal to cast his thesis thus: "Everything is sensible of its own constitution." But '*sensus*' is a noun. I can find no easy English equivalent for this syntactical form.

against attempts to explain animal behavior as entirely learned from experience. On the contrary, Seneca argues, core elements of that behavior must be acknowledged as both innate and species-specific. The affinity of Seneca's position on this point with modern biological accounts has not escaped attention. Gummere calls Seneca's nativist thesis "sound and modern"; Long and Sedley treat it as "an attempt, and an interesting one, to do justice to data which would now be explained by reference to natural selection and genetic coding."[36]

But Seneca's positive argument will seem much less compelling to a modern audience. His main positive evidence for animal self-consciousness is the 'apt and expedient' bodily skills animals exhibit, an agility he compares to some stock examples of skillful behavior in the crafts:

> That this is the case is proved particularly by their making motions of such fitness and nimbleness [*apte et expedite movent*] that they seem to be trained [*erudite*] for the purpose. Every being is clever [*agilitas est*] in its own line. The skilled workman handles his tools with an ease born of experience; the pilot knows how to steer his ship skillfully; the artist can quickly lay on the colors which he has prepared in great variety for the purpose of rendering the likeness, and passes with ready eye and hand from palette to canvas. In the same way an animal is agile in all that pertains to the use of its body.[37]

Seneca's claim seems to be that the similar phenomena must have a similar cause. Since artisan agility is the product of intimate knowledge of the tools and materials that are so aptly handled, Seneca concludes that animal agility must be an expression of an analogous familiarity with that which animals handle so adeptly – that is, their own bodies. The difference is that while an artisan's knowledge of his tools is acquired through training and experience, an animal's bodily self-knowledge is part of its innate endowment:

> But that which art gives to the craftsman, is given to the animal by nature. No animal handles its limbs with difficulty, no animal is at a loss how to use its body. This function they exercise immediately at birth. They come into the world with this knowledge [*scientia*]; they are born full-trained.[38]

To rely on this line of argument is to find oneself squeezed from both sides of the modern debates about self-consciousness. Cartesians will certainly deny that any behavioral criterion could suffice to prove self-consciousness, which is something that can be established only by and for the self-conscious being itself. No amount of animal agility could suffice to demonstrate that animals have an inner conscious life. But Descartes' modern critics will find the Stoic argument no more palatable, since they will simply deny that self-consciousness or self-awareness is needed to explain 'apt and expedient' animal behavior. Such behavior can be assumed to be hardwired for survival, without requiring any kind of psychic self-presence. So from both sides of the standard divide, Seneca's argument looks to be a plain *non sequitur*. Before putting this down to Seneca's failings as a philosopher, however, we should once again insure against anachronism by deploying our inferentialist approach. If Seneca confidently relies on an argument that is plainly fallacious when interpreted in

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[36] Gummere (editor and translator), Seneca's *Epistles 93-124* (Loeb Classical library, 1925, 2000), 406n; Long and Sedley 1987, 1:351.
[37] Seneca, *Epistles* 121, 5-6.
[38] Seneca, *Epistles* 121, 6.

modern terms, then perhaps this indicates that he means something quite different by 'self-consciousness' than we moderns do.

So what, exactly, does Seneca mean to attribute to animals? The closest Seneca comes to addressing this issue directly comes in his reply to the second objection, which charges that the Stoics have over-intellectualized animal psychology. Interestingly, the turf on which the dispute unfolds shifts at this point from animal to child psychology.

> But some object as follows: "According to your account, one's constitution consists of a ruling power in the soul which has a certain relation towards the body. But how can a child comprehend this intricate and subtle principle, which I can scarcely explain even to you? All living creatures should be born logicians, so as to understand a definition which is obscure to the majority of Roman citizens!"[39]

In defending the Stoic thesis from this objection, Seneca sets out to clarify the self-conscious self-knowledge that is at issue. The first crucial point to notice is the specification of the *object* of self-consciousness. What is known in self-consciousness is said to be "the constitution" of the organism. This is feature of the Stoic position that we can see at work throughout the tradition. In the position attributed to Chrysippus, animal self-consciousness is said to be of "of its own constitution" [*hauton sustasis*]; Cicero renders this term both as *status* and as *constitutio*, which is the term found in Seneca. Seneca's text explains what is meant by this. An animal's constitution is said to be its ruling power or principle. It is that part of the animal's nature that determines how it is to behave, how its parts interact properly, and ultimately how it is to preserve itself and thrive. Hence in attributing innate self-consciousness to all animals, the Stoics are attributing a form of *practical self-comprehension*. Already with this first point we can mark the first fundamental difference between Stoic and Cartesian self-consciousness. Whereas Cartesian self-consciousness is first and foremost a knowledge of my existence, and specifically of my psychological existence, Stoic self-consciousness is a form of *bodily comprehension* – not a knowledge that I exist but an understanding of what kind of being I am, and specifically of what kind of body I have and what befits it.

But what kind of understanding is this, exactly, such that it might plausibly be attributed to newborns, children and animals? In replying to his critic, Seneca is at pains to distinguish sharply between this self-conscious self-understanding and the kind of understanding that might be possessed by a zoologist or a psychologist. By comparison to an explicit scientific specification of an organism's constitution, our innate self-understanding is described as "confused, cursory and dark" [*crasse, summatim et obscure*]; it is "not very clearly outlined or portrayed" [*non satis dilucidus nec expressus*]. Moreover, it doesn't provide the animal or child with "a definition of his constitution" [*constitutionis finitionem*], either in the sense of providing explicit definitions of the sort that one would expect in a zoological theory or in the sense of establishing the precise limits of its kind. In short, it is an *implicit and inarticulate self-understanding*, in contrast to the explicit account one might aim for in science.

But there is a further mark of this distinctive self-comprehension that will be particularly important to us in what follows, and this pertains to the term both Cicero and Seneca use in describing

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[39] Seneca, *Epistles* 121, 10.

self-consciousness. It is a *sensus*. As Seneca writes here: "he [the animal] does not know what 'a living organism' is, but he *feels* [*sentit*] that he is an animal." The self-knowledge provided in self-consciousness is not what a later tradition would call a discursive representation; its medium is not conceptual. Indeed Seneca insists that neither the animal nor the child understand what a constitution is, though they do understand their own constitutions. In other words, animals and children are said to lack the concept of that which they comprehend. It is in their attempts to name this distinctive form of *non-conceptual knowledge* that the Roman Stoics use the term *sensus*. We might get at this by saying that the medium of self-consciousness is not ideas but sensations or feelings, but here again we must tread carefully. For Stoic *sensus* must not be confused with the sensations and impressions of the later empiricist tradition. It should be clear that it is not a bare conscious content – what is nowadays called a *qualia*. For it has both a cognitive and a practical dimension that mere sensations lack. Neither is it a narrowly psychological state, if this is meant to be contrasted to a state of one's body. Stoic self-sense is a discriminating bodily self-comprehension that immediately guides and controls one's actions and provides orientation and agility in one's endeavors.

In sum, we can say that the self-consciousness Seneca attributes to animals and young children is an implicit, non-discursive understanding of one's own body and of that which preserves it, informing an ability to find significant differences among the various available courses of endeavor. How does this conception of self-consciousness compare to later accounts? It should be clear from this that the self-consciousness that figures in Seneca's Stoicism differs down the line from that which concerns Descartes. It is not explicit or discursive self-representation but a comprehending sentiment of oneself; it is not knowledge of one's own psychological state but of one's bodily constitution; it is not narrowly factual but immediately normative. The claim is not that animals enjoy a conscious self-presence or an inner life, but that they have an innate self-comprehension that provides them with an implicit answer to the question, "what kind of being am I?" And its main role is not to underwrite the knowledge that I exist but rather the understanding of what I ought to do.

But it should also now be clear that Stoic self-consciousness is not to be equated with proprioception either, although proprioception might indeed be said to be an essential aspect of this form of self-comprehension, and it does contribute to the characteristic agility and even grace of animal movements, which is just what Seneca set out to explain. But Long is wrong in equating the two. Long defines proprioception as a form of perception, taking his lead from Sherrington's canonical description of "muscular sensations which contribute to perceptions of the relative flexions or extensions of our limbs."[40] The key point is that proprioception, so-defined, involves neither the distinctive form of self-comprehension nor the normative discrimination that is central to Stoic self-consciousness. In short, it informs me as to the position of my body; it does not tell me what I ought to do with it. Moreover, proprioception does not play the role that Cato had claimed for self-

[40] Long 1993, 258, quoting Sherrington 1906, 343.

consciousness as a condition on the possibility of desire. For it is plain that trauma victims who have lost proprioceptive capacities due to paralysis are still quite able to experience desire.[41]

§5 A Transcendental Role?

It is clear from the extant sources that the Stoics took self-consciousness to be fundamental in at least two respects. In psychology, as we have seen, bodily self-comprehension was held to structure the first motives of an organism, and to provide thereby the basis for infantile agency. In ethics, the doctrine of self-conscious *Oikeiosis* was held to provide the proper starting point in the exposition of Stoic moral teachings. But we have also found traces of yet a third respect in which the Stoics held self-consciousness to be fundamental: as a condition underwriting the very possibility of further psychological states. Having arrived at an interpretation of self-consciousness as the Stoics understood it, are we now in a position to reconstruct this line of Stoic thought?

In tackling this question, we can take our bearing from the passage in *de Finibus* where we first encountered this claim. Recall in particular that in the argument against Epicurean psychology, Cicero has his Stoic spokesman claim that "it would be impossible that they should feel desire at all unless they possessed self-consciousness, and consequently felt affection for themselves" (Cicero, *de Finibus* III, 16). It is striking the extent to which this formula anticipates the distinctive cocktail of themes associated with the later (Kantian) transcendental tradition. As with Kant, we start here with a generally acknowledged fact of experience – in this case the fact that we feel or experience desire – and proceed to an argument that purports to establish an underlying self-consciousness. The path from premise to conclusion runs along a modal trajectory: from an actual fact to a condition on its possibility. For our purposes this is the crucial feature of the argument. Why should self-consciousness serve as a condition on the possibility of desire?

In approaching Cato's thesis we will need to draw on other sources, as Cicero's text says nothing to defend it. Once again Seneca's letter on animals proves useful. Although Seneca does not make exactly the same claim as Cicero's Cato, he does seem to rely on the pattern of argument that here concerns us, from acknowledged fact to underlying condition.

> [A]ll animals possess a consciousness of their own constitutions [*omnia animalia constitutionis suae sensus est*]. For they must necessarily feel this [*Necesse est enim id sentiant*], because it is the same agency by which they feel [*sentiunt*] other things also ….[42]

Note in particular the claim to necessity that figures here. Seneca seems to be claiming not only that animals *do* have a kind of self-conscious self-understanding, but they *must* have it. In Seneca's argument, however, this necessity is keyed not to desire but to perception. Self-awareness is necessary, according to Seneca, because it is requisite for an organism's awareness of things other than its own

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[41] For a gripping account of the phenomenology of proprioceptive disruption, see Cole 1995.
[42] Seneca, *Epistles* 121, 12.

body. Consciousness of objects, it seems, would be impossible without consciousness of self. Once again, however, we are left to wonder about the basis for this modal claim.

Here the Greek sources provide a crucial lead. In a fragment from Hierocles' *Elements of Ethics*, discovered early in the 20th century, we find an elaboration of this line of thought. I quote the relevant excerpts in full, following Long's reconstruction and translation of the fragmentary source:

> It seems right to say a few words about sensation [*aistheseos*]. For this contributes to knowledge of the first thing which is appropriate [*tou protou oikeiou*], the subject which we said would be the best starting-point for the elements of ethics. We should realize that as soon as an animal is born it perceives itself [*aisthanetai eautou*] … The first thing that animals perceive is their own parts … both that they have them and for what purpose they have them, and we ourselves perceive our eyes and our ears and the rest. So whenever we want to see something, we strain our eyes, but not our ears, toward the visible object. Therefore the first proof of every animal's perceiving itself is its consciousness [*synaisthesis*] of its parts and the functions for which they were given. (Hierocles, *Elements of Ethics*, 1 34-39, 51-57.)

Several of Hierocles' claims here should by now be familiar. Ethical theory should begin with an exposition of *Oikeiosis*, which is associated with a form of self-consciousness or self-perception – a self-consciousness that is held to be an innate endowment of every animal organism. What is new here is, first of all, a piece of terminology that Hierocles introduces to name this distinctive self-awareness. What Chrysippus had called *syneidesin* and Seneca would name *sensus sui,* Hierocles here dubs *synaisthesis* – etymologically: "with-perception" or "co-perception." *Synaisthesis* is of course the etymological root for the modern psychological term "synæsthesia," the perceptual disorder whereby stimulus for one sensory modality (e.g., the sight of the setting sun) is experienced in a different sensory mode (e.g., as a taste). But the synæsthesia with which Hierocles is concerned is something quite different – not perception across sensory modalities but rather a perception of self that accompanies every perception of an object, an apperception. Like Seneca, then, Hierocles holds that object-consciousness presupposes self-consciousness. But Hierocles' fragment goes further than Seneca's letter in explaining why this should be the case. In the perception of an object, he maintains, the perceiving organism exercises its implicit understanding of its own perceptual organs together with an implicit normative grasp their proper use. In trying to make out a distant object, as Hierocles puts it, "we strain our eyes and not our ears." In this respect our perceptual organs are like the artisan's tools; we require a familiarity with their proper use and their proper objects in order to exercise them effectively. Hierocles goes on in the fragment to compare the perceptual organs to animal weaponry: the bull exhibits its implicit understanding of its weapons and their appropriate use when it lowers its head for a charge. Far from being a disorder, then, Hierocletian synæsthesia is part of the proper functioning of our sensory apparatus. Once again we can think of this self-consciousness as a kind of prior orientation that is brought to the perceptual situation. In the first instance it is an orientation with respect to one's own body, in this case one's perceptual apparatus. But once again we find that this first-order orientation shapes and structures our experience of our environment: *ta oikeia*, in this instance, are the appropriate objects of our perceptual apparatus and their proper "fit" with our own perceptual equipment.

With Hierocles' conception of synæsthesia in hand, we can now return to the proto-transcendental claims we encountered in Cicero and Seneca. As we have seen, Seneca claims that self-consciousness is necessary, since it is somehow implicated in an animal's awareness of other objects. Drawing on Hierocles' remarks about perception, we can now begin to recognize the motivation for this claim. Perception of an object, on this account, is to be understood as a form of endeavor or accomplishment. If this endeavor may not normally be a salient aspect of a perceptual encounter, this can be put down to our extraordinary proficiency at carrying out everyday perceptual tasks. But as Hierocles observes, perceptual endeavor ('straining') does become salient in those cases where perceptual success is not immediate. The crucial point here is that in undertaking perceptual endeavors the organism does not simply register so much perceptual input; we will misunderstand the place of the perceiver if we think of our perceptual organs as simply on the receiving end of a causal chain. Rather, we must *exercise* our perceptual organs, bringing them to bear and attuning them to the perceptual object. But in order for this to be possible, we must have some an implicit understanding of what those organs are, what they are for, and how they can be deployed so as attain perceptual success. If putting the point in this way runs the danger of making perception sound like a piece of intentional and strategic behaviour, then we need only recall Seneca's insistence that this self-comprehension is an implicit and inarticulate native endowment of animal nature. Observe the blackbird in the garden, startled by a potential predator. Notice the way it cocks its head, first one way and then another, bringing the potential threat into the scope of binocular vision, assessing its size and distance and reacting accordingly. It is only in virtue of its ability to carry out this sequence of movements that the bird achieves perceptual success – gauging the threat and evading it. Its ability to do all this depends on its finely-tuned prior orientation in its perceptual space, which in turn is the fruit of a intelligent mastery – instinctive and implicit to be sure – of the proper deployment of its perceptual apparatus. It is in this sense, I submit, that Seneca and Hierocles hold that self-consciousness (of the distinctively Stoic variety) serves as a condition on the possibility of objective perception.

What about Cato's claim in *de Finibus*? Does this analysis of synæsthetic perception generalize to the case of desire? The analogy is strained, I think, if only because we don't normally think of animals as having "organs of desire" in quite the same way that they have perceptual organs. But like perception, desire is an intentional state: that is, both desire and perception require some thing or state-of-affairs as an object. The very possibility of desire, in this sense, presupposes some way in which its object can be determinate. Simply to be in a stew of dissatisfied affect does not amount to a state of desire any more than a show of colors and sounds itself amounts to perception of an object. So what is the role of self-consciousness in underwriting the possibility of desire? The key lies in understanding the distinctive structure and function of Stoic self-consciousness, and particularly the role it plays in providing an organism with normative orientation in its environment. To desire or 'have an appetite' for something presupposes that we have some way of distinguishing between what seems worth pursuing and what is to be avoided -- predator from prey, nourishment from toxin, even pleasure from pain. Without some such capacity for discrimination desire could have no determinate content and could provide no guidance in action. On the Stoic view, such distinctions are essentially

kind-relative, hence the capacity to draw them must be grounded in an incipient understanding of one's distinctive mode of being. As we have seen, it is just such a self-understanding that the Stoics see as the central deliverance of self-consciousness.[43]

[43] Note on further work: In pursuing this further I would like to consider three lines of objection to this analysis, not so much with an aim to defend the Stoics down the line, but in order to explore the Stoic theory by subjecting it to stress. For present purposes I will simply name these three objections, leaving detailed discussion to another occasion.

a) The Epicurean Retort: The Stoics are right to claim that normative orientation is required for desire, but wrong to suppose that this requires self-conscious self-comprehension or Hierocletian synæsthesia. The encounter with pleasure and pain – and thence with the objects or endeavors that produce pleasure and pain – suffices to provide the necessary normative orientation.

b) The Ugly Duckling Objection: An organism may be oriented in its environment even though it badly misunderstand its own bodily constitution. The ugly duckling is a swan but thinks it is a duck, and so does duckish things, whether or not duckish things benefit or befit it. So self-comprehending self-consciousness is not required for normative orientation.

c) The Logical Objection. The Stoic argument turns on the fallacy of affirming the consequent. As applied to human beings, the argument I have reconstructed effectively works from three premises. Very roughly:
(i) Humans experience determinate desire and perceive determinate objects.
(ii) In order to experience desire and perceive determinate objects an organism must have normative orientation in its sphere of endeavor.
(iii) Stoic self consciousness provides normative orientation in an organism's sphere of endeavor.
From this it is concluded that humans require Stoic self-consciousness. But this is a form of affirming the consequent. It neglects the possibility that there could be some other way in which normative orientation might be delivered. The Epicurean Retort proposes one account of the source of that orientation, but even if the Epicurean account is inadequate, the Stoics cannot claim to have established their transcendental thesis.

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