

"VIRTUE ETHICS" AND THE PROBLEM OF ADVISING FOOLS¹

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ABSTRACT: "Virtue ethics" tells us to do what the virtuous person would do in our circumstances. But if we are not virtuous—if we are "fools"—then the virtuous person would not be in our circumstances. How, then, can virtue theory advise a fool about what to do? I quickly suggest reasons to be pessimistic about recent approaches to this problem, and then I turn to the ancients' eudaimonism for a fresh alternative. The ancient Socratics, including especially the Stoics, counsel not causally promoting one's virtue or trying to follow "v-rules" but approximating virtue. I argue that Stoic psychopathology offers considerable help in making sense of how fools might approximate virtue and how advisors might use Socratic eudaimonism's conception of virtue to guide fools to the best action in their circumstances.

1. The Problem of Advising Fools

Some people believe that ancient Greek and Roman philosophy provides an attractive alternative to modern moral philosophy. Instead of thinking that one should act in accordance with the correct moral principles or that one should act so as to promote the best consequences, these reactionaries suggest that one should act as a virtuous person would act in one's circumstances (see, e.g., Hursthouse 1999).

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But there are problems with this formula, several of which are rooted in the difference between virtuous persons and the rest of us. First, we who are not virtuous sometimes find ourselves in circumstances foreign to any virtuous person. Hursthouse (1999, 50-51), for example, imagines a cad who has led each of two women to believe that he wants to settle down with her and has impregnated both. We cannot even begin to imagine what the virtuous person would do in such a circumstance because a virtuous person would not be in such a circumstance. Also, we are often unable to do what the virtuous person would do. Although the virtuous person would dine with the presenter after the colloquium and then finish her overdue grading after dinner, I might know that if I went to dinner, I would be unable to resist the wine that would make me unable to work responsibly later in the evening (cf. Williams 1995, 190). I cannot do what the virtuous person would do. So what should I do instead? Finally, it is clear that those of us who are not virtuous should spend some time working toward becoming virtuous, although of course a virtuous person does not do any such thing (Johnson 2003; cf. Railton 1986, 174n15). In each of these cases, one cannot appeal to virtue theory's formula to explain what a person should do.

Invoking the Stoics' provocative term 'fool' to describe all who are not virtuous, I call the problem posed by such cases the problem of advising fools.² The problem, thus far, is not that it is difficult to appeal to virtue theory's general principle in order to explain what should be done, or that it requires judgment to explain how the principle applies. The problem is that in many ordinary cases the principle simply does not apply.

So it is tempting to revise virtue theory's general principle. All fools have virtuous

² It often appears in the journals as the "problem of action-guidance," the "practicality objection," or the "application problem." But these labels cover a host of distinct concerns, not all of which are predicated on the gap between the virtuous and the rest of us.

counterparts, the people they might be were they virtuous, and some of these counterparts are nearer (requiring fewer changes) than others. Perhaps one should act as one's nearest virtuous counterpart would want or advise one to act (cf. Railton 1986, 173-174, and Smith 1994, 151). Either of these revisions (whether the counterpart's desires or advice matters) gives us a general principle that applies even when we are far from virtue, as we will still have our virtuous counterpart who can take our current circumstances, internal and external, into consideration. But the revised principle does not tell us anything about what to do, because it says nothing about what to expect our virtuous counterpart to want or advise us to do. Although we now have a basic principle of virtue theory that applies even to decidedly vicious agents, it does not address our problem.

One way to notice this is to realize that our virtuous counterpart might, for all that the revised principle tells us, want or advise us to follow the right moral rules or produce the best consequences. This objection can get traction against the initial formulation of virtue theory's basic principle, too: for all that formula says, the virtuous person might be the one who follows the right rules or maximizes goodness. (This, after all, is what deontologists and consequentialists say about the virtuous person!)³ As long as this is a possibility, then we know nothing about how "virtue ethics" distinctively helps us to determine what to do. And of course in the case of the revised principle, our counterpart cannot want or advise us to do as she would do, not in the cases that prompt the problem of advising fools. So what else could our virtuous counterpart tell us?

After these maneuvers, the problem of advising fools is not that virtue theory lacks a formula that applies to some cases, but that it lacks a formula that offers any contentful

³ Consider, e.g., how Rawls (1971) insists that moral worth derives from some prior articulation of the right or the good. Watson (1990) offers an especially searching reply.

application to fools. To be told that one should do as one's virtuous counterpart would want is like being told to do the best one can. The problem is that this does not help us in any way to determine what action is the best available to us. Again, it is not merely that it is difficult, or that it requires judgment, to apply the formula. It would remain difficult and require judgment if we knew roughly where to look. But we do not even know that.

The problem does not entirely disappear if we give up on a single general principle and embrace a litany of rules that express the essential commitments of virtuous dispositions. Hursthouse (1999, 51) hopes that these "v-rules"—virtue-rules such as "try a little tenderness" and especially vice-rules such as "don't be cruel"—would provide guidance to the cad. And of course they might. Perhaps all the relevant v-rules support a single course of action for the cad. But there are many v-rules, and sometimes, the fool is in a situation where some v-rules support doing one thing and others tell against doing that very thing. Consider a hotheaded squash player who, in the wake of a tough defeat, desires to smash his opponent in the head with his racquet.⁴ Should he approach the opponent to shake hands? Yes, say some v-rules: "Be a good sport." But no, say others: "Avoid special situations in which you are likely to behave badly."⁵ What is the right advice? How are we to prioritize or otherwise sort through the various v-rules when they offer conflicting guidance? The virtuous agent might be thought to provide a standard for this

⁴ I am readapting an example from Watson (1975, 210), previously adapted by Smith (1995, 111). I thank Sarah Raskoff for help tracking down the references, when I could only vaguely recall them.

⁵ These formulations might not perfectly suit Hursthouse, but I take it that if these are not canonical v-rules, they are entailed by canonical v-rules.

purpose, but the virtuous agent does not apply to the hothead's case.⁶ The virtuous advisor applies, but the theory provides no hint of how he or she would sort through the v-rules. And the v-rules, by themselves, have too much application to the fool's situation. The whole set of v-rules, lacking any principle or model to guide our application of it, explains too many possible actions as the right action and thereby fails to explain what a person should do.

The v-rules are an improvement over a general principle that does not apply and over a general principle that applies without content. But they do not remove the problem of advising fools. Again, it is not merely difficult, or a matter for judgment, to get from the v-rules to the thing to do. Without some principle or model or set of considerations to guide the application of the v-rules, the ethics of v-rules says nothing about which of the many actions licensed or even required by the whole set of v-rules in these particular circumstances should be done.⁷

I take this to be a problem. It is not necessarily fatal. Perhaps usefully determinate advice for fools is too much to ask of a normative ethical theory. The virtue theorist's appeal to "v-rules" puts her on equal footing with many theorists of other stripes, and perhaps no more applicable account of what should be done is plausible (cf. Hursthouse 2005, 106-107). Still, other things being equal, it would be good for the virtue theorist to solve the problem of advising fools by offering more guidance about how to determine what a fool should do. This is so for two reasons. First, it is entirely plausible that, as Aristotle insisted, the point of ethical theory is to live better

⁶ If I understand her right, Hursthouse (1999, 52-62) accepts (and tries to mitigate the apparent undesirability of accepting) that there are cases in which virtue theory cannot provide any guidance beyond a list of v-rules whose recommendations appear to conflict in ways that a non-virtuous person (especially an inexperienced, non-virtuous person) would be unable to sort through. Presumably, she thinks that anyone unlucky enough to be stuck in such a circumstance should seek advice from his moral superiors (35). But my question concerns this advice: how exactly does thinking about virtue help the moral superior advise the fool? Hursthouse's general principle and her v-rules do not make it clear how it could.

⁷ For more skepticism about Hursthouse's attempt to solve the problem, see Driver (**cite**) and **citations**.

(EN I.4 1095a5-6, II.2 1103b26-29, and X.9 1179a35-b4), and plausible that ethical theory will not help us live better unless it gives useful advice to fools.⁸ Given the plausibility of these points, we cannot easily believe that the problem of advising fools is a pseudo-problem. Additionally, as we have seen, the problem of advising fools (re)introduces important questions about how best to formulate the basic principle(s) of "virtue ethics." Because existing formulations trigger the problem, a solution should offer fresh understanding what "virtue ethics" is.

In this essay, I suggest a potential solution to the problem by looking back. I argue that some ancient Greeks have a way of understanding "virtue ethics" that solves the problem of advising fools.

2. Eudaimonism and the Problem of Advising Fools

At first blush, it might seem obvious that the ancients offer a solution. They appeal to a practical principle more basic than virtue theory's dictum that one should act as the virtuous person would. This is the eudaimonist principle that one should act always for the sake of one's own success (eudaimonia, which I shall henceforth treat as an English word). The eudaimonist principle is taken to be more basic than virtue theory's dictum because it is supposed to explain and justify virtue theory's dictum: according to the ancients, one should act as the virtuous person would because if one acted as the virtuous person would, one would achieve success. The

⁸ We could, I suppose, flatter ourselves with the thought that we are not fools. But it would be disastrous for our theory of virtue to suppose that it is regularly attained by the likes of us, as the best responses to Doris' (2002) challenge to "virtue ethics" recognize (see esp. Kamtekar 2004). In any case, even if we were virtuous, would virtue theory then help us to live better? It seems that if virtue theory is going to help anyone at all, it needs to show the way toward virtue for people who are not virtuous.

eudaimonist principle seems to apply simply to all human beings, virtuous and vicious alike, and so it seems to solve, quite straightforwardly, the problem of advising fools.⁹

But things are not so straightforward. The ancients disagree about what eudaimonia is and, more importantly, about how one acts for the sake of it. According to some, to act for the sake of one's eudaimonia is to act so as to bring about one's eudaimonia as a separate state of affairs. I call this consequentialist eudaimonism.¹⁰ Its most prominent ancient proponents are the Epicureans, but one might also consider the theory that Socrates moots in the Protagoras and the theory that late-antique sources attribute to Democritus. According to other ancients, eudaimonia is an activity—it is virtuous activity—and to act for the sake of one's eudaimonia is to try to instantiate it.¹¹ This view takes literally and seriously the ancient platitude that eudaimonia is "living well" or "doing well," and I call it Socratic because it is native to Socrates' most prominent followers, including Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics.

⁹ Hursthouse (1999) also maintains that eudaimonism underwrites the principle that one should act as a virtuous person would, but she does not try to extract practical guidance directly from any eudaimonist principle. (Indeed, it is not clear that she should, since on her commonsense notion of eudaimonia, virtue is neither necessary nor sufficient for it [172-173].) Instead, she appeals to eudaimonism only to elucidate the general grounds on which we can properly identify which character traits are virtues.

¹⁰ I am stipulating what 'consequentialist eudaimonism' means. I do not mean by 'consequentialist' exactly what Anscombe (1958) meant, when she coined the term, or what most philosophers presently mean. On these other construals, 'consequentialism' evaluates actions by their consequences for everyone, and not just for the agent, and "consequentialists" usually do not insist that the consequences relevant to evaluating an action exclude the action.

¹¹ Note that the second claim here does not follow from the first. One might think that one can successfully ϕ for the sake of X only if ϕ ing efficiently causes X, in which case one could successfully act virtuously for the sake of virtuous activity only if one's virtuous action brought about more virtuous activity. But no Socratic eudaimonist would accept that evaluation of one's virtuous action: they want their principle to explain why one should find intrinsic value in one's virtuous action itself and not merely in some future "virtuous activity" that one's action might bring about. So they do not think that one can successfully ϕ for the sake of X only if ϕ ing efficiently causes X. They recognize non-efficient causal relationships (or efficient causal relationships broader than Humean strictures would allow) and non-causal 'for the sake of' relationships (for which, see Kraut 1989, 87-88, and Lear 2004).

This classification of ancient eudaimonisms might raise some eyebrows,¹² but it does not matter for my present purposes whether it is exhaustive (it is not)¹³ or whether it accurately

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- ¹² Many scholars have recognized that at least some eudaimonists think of eudaimonia as virtuous activity whereas others think of it as something separate from and produced by virtuous activity, but I do not know of any scholar (aside from Brown 2008) who has emphasized this distinction or drawn significant inferences from it. Perhaps Annas (1993, esp. 36-37) comes closest, but instead of articulating a contrast within eudaimonism, she insists that one has to abdicate eudaimonism to claim that one's final good is a state of affairs to be brought about. I believe but cannot argue here that this misconstrues Epicurean ethics, inevitably misrepresents the hedonist theory in the Protagoras (cf. Annas 1993, 37 and 228), and cannot easily accommodate later antiquity's understanding of Democritean ethics. I also depart from Annas' account by distinguishing the non-consequentialist eudaimonism according to which eudaimonia is simply virtuous activity (Socratic) from the one according to which it is virtuous activity and more (Peripatetic: see the next note).
- ¹³ Some ancient eudaimonists saw the final good for the sake of which one should act as a grab-bag including one's action and a motley assortment of goods, some of which would be consequences of one's action. This Peripatetic view became prominent in the wake of Carneades' mischievous division of ethical theories (see esp. Cicero, De Finibus V, and Stobaeus II 7.3, but cf. Magna Moralia 1184a25-30). The view would have us consider, in addition to how we might best try to act virtuously or at least in accord with virtue, how we might best bring about the other goods that it counts as part of the eudaimonia we should bring about. Whatever insights or advantages this view might offer—and I believe that it offers more confusion and disadvantages than insights and advantages—it first needs to determine how we can best try to act virtuously or at least in accord with virtue. So the work I do in this essay might help to clarify Peripatetic eudaimonism, even though I have to leave for another occasion a fuller reckoning of the Peripatetic view.

represents Plato,¹⁴ Aristotle,¹⁵ or Epicurus¹⁶ (who are, I take it, the most contentious cases).

Three points matter. First, only the consequentialist sort of eudaimonism offers a simple solution to the problem of advising fools. It says that one should do whatever best promotes one's own eudaimonia, and it is clear where to look to determine what a fool should do, even if the determination might be difficult and require judgment. The Socratic sort of eudaimonism, by contrast, simply says that one should act virtuously, and so it plainly faces the problem of advising fools.

Second, consequentialist eudaimonism's simple solution to the problem of advising fools

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- ¹⁴ White (**citation**) thinks that Plato is not a eudaimonist at all, principally because he thinks that the Republic's philosophers sacrifice their eudaimonia to rule, but see Brown 2000 and 2004. Other scholars would question the claim that Plato's eudaimonism is what I call Socratic. Some want to extract from Republic IX or the Laws some hedonism that might be in tension with Socratic eudaimonism (**citations**), and others want to extract from the Philebus a view like the one the Peripatetics developed (**citations**). By contrast, I am impressed by Socratic dialogues' frequent insistence that the goal is "living well" or "doing well" (Charmides 171e-172a, Crito 48b, Gorgias 507c; cf. Republic I 354a), and by Socrates' use of these phrases interchangeably with eudaimonia and being eudaimōn in the Euthydemus (278e-282d), and I do not see anything that requires Plato to retract these simple identifications. Obviously, though, this needs fuller argument elsewhere.
- ¹⁵ Kraut (1989) appeals to a discussion of exile in the Politics and argues that Aristotle is not a eudaimonist, and Whiting (**citation**) appeals to the discussion of friendship in the Nicomachean Ethics and argues the same. But there is a general reason resist these moves: if Plato embraced eudaimonism, then we should expect Aristotle to make more noise renouncing it. Besides those doubters, so-called "inclusivist" readers (**citations**) attribute to Aristotle the view I call Peripatetic eudaimonism (see note 00 above). But the inclusivists (like the Peripatetics) misread Aristotle. Aristotle avows again and again that eudaimonia is virtuous activity, even as he is working hard to show that this view can embrace and even explain apparently conflicting platitudes concerning the importance of external goods. (See especially λόγος at EN I 8 1098b20 and 1098b31, I 9 1099b25, and I 10 1100b11; but also EN I 8 1099a29-31, I 10 1100a13-14, and I 13 1102a5-6. Brown (2006b) discusses these.) But Aristotle does complicate his identification of eudaimonia with virtuous activity by adding that it must be virtuous activity temporally extended over a complete life. (See EN I 7 1098a18-20, with I 10 1101a16, X 7 1177b25, and Brown 2006b, 224-225. Cf. EN III 2 1111b28-29 with Brown 2006b, 239-240.) It is worth emphasizing that a Socratic eudaimonist can reject Aristotle's addendum; indeed, some Stoics might have. Plutarch offers contrasting testimony at Stoic. rep. 1046c-e and Comm. not. 1061f-1062a.
- ¹⁶ Mitsis (1988) and Annas (1993) argue otherwise. But I am struck by the fact that Epicurus finds mere instrumental value in so many of the things that most eudaimonists consider intrinsically valuable, including friendship (see Brown 2002 and 2009) and philosophical activity (see Brown 2008). I also suspect that Epicurus cannot consider eudaimonia to be virtuous activity because he takes it to be pleasure and he takes pleasure to be a passive condition (pathos). Indeed, he must take pleasure to be a pathos because, on his view, if it were not passive, it would not be an inerrant guide for action as sense-perception is an inerrant guide for judgments. But, again, this requires more argument elsewhere.

will not appeal to most adherents of "virtue ethics." Adherents of "virtue ethics" believe that a virtuous person must value his or her virtuous actions for their own sake. Consequentialist eudaimonism cannot directly accommodate this requirement, because according to it, a virtuous action is valuable only because it brings about eudaimonia as a state of affairs separate from the action. The virtue theorists on whose behalf I am toiling today do not want to embrace this view.¹⁷

So if any ancient eudaimonism can solve the problem of advising fools for theorists of "virtue ethics," some ancient Socratic eudaimonism can. A third point about my classification now matters: it is uncontroversial that at least the Stoics were what I am calling Socratic eudaimonists. Stoics distinguish between the target (skopos) a rational agent aims at (namely, a body of a certain sort) and the goal (telos) for the sake of which the agent acts (namely, being or living a certain way), and they are explicit that the goal is to live virtuously.¹⁸

So my primary claim in this essay is that Stoic eudaimonism offers a promising response to the problem of advising fools. But I will continue to speak more generally and suggest that Socratic eudaimonism offers a promising response to the problem of advising fools. I do this to set the stakes of my position accurately, and to invite objections to my full position. I am

¹⁷ One might suggest that consequentialist eudaimonism can accommodate the requirement that a virtuous agent find his or her virtuous actions intrinsically valuable. One might insist that nobody can successfully act for the sake of their eudaimonia except by accepting the fiction that virtuous actions are intrinsically valuable. Alternatively, one might construe consequentialist eudaimonism as a "two-level" view, according to which (level one) a person should be virtuous because it best brings about his or her own eudaimonia and (level two) a virtuous person should value virtue for its own sake. (O'Keefe (2001) attributes such a view to Epicurus, but with Annas (1993, 240-242) and Evans (2004, 414-416), I believe that RS 25 rules it out.) But these are also unlikely to appeal to the fans of "virtue ethics." These fans typically believe that virtue requires clear-eyed, correct apprehension of the value of one's actions and why they have that value. Relatedly, ancient eudaimonists desired that the agent's pursuit of his own good directly give him or her reason to act virtuously, so that the reasons that explain the virtuous person's behavior would also be the reasons that justify it. The fictionalist and two-level consequentialist eudaimonists do not satisfy these desiderata. **move this up?**

¹⁸ See especially Stobaeus II 7.6c 77,1-5 (with the Stoic-inspired Stobaeus II 7.3c 47,7-11) and 7.6e 77,16-27.

proposing, and giving some support to, the broad claim about Socratic eudaimonism, but I am arguing conscientiously only for the narrow claim about the Stoics.

3. Socratic Eudaimonism and the Problem of Advising Fools

According to Socratic eudaimonism, we should act for the sake of a final goal and that goal is simply virtuous activity. So how can this view explain what the fool should do? This principle does not always apply to the fool, and not merely because he cannot do what the virtuous person does in the way that the virtuous person does it (that is, from virtue) but also because he cannot perform some actions the virtuous person would perform and because he should perform some actions the virtuous person would not. The Socratic eudaimonist plainly has a problem advising fools.

One might try to help the Socratic eudaimonists by investigating more closely their idea of virtuous activity.¹⁹ The Socratics broadly agree that virtuous activity is wise activity,²⁰ that wise activity is activity from wisdom, and that wisdom is a coherent set of psychological commitments. The first two of those identities are widely recognized, but the third is perhaps not. To see why the Socratics identified wisdom with psychological coherence, consider Socrates. Socrates' pursuit of wisdom largely consists in examining himself and others to see whether his or their commitments (beliefs, desires, emotions) cohere. When he finds inconsistency, he is

¹⁹ One may contrast what follows with Hursthouse's (1999) strategy of filling in the account of virtuous actions by reference to "v-rules."

²⁰ Aristotle would want the qualification that "fully virtuous" or "virtuous activity strictly speaking" is wise activity (EN VI 13). Plato and the early Stoics are typically less accommodating of "ordinary virtue," but notice Plato's notion of "political courage" (politikē andreia, Rep. IV 430c2-4).

certain that those he is examining fail to have knowledge.²¹ But what must he think about wisdom if he takes himself to be pursuing wisdom in this way? Socrates could not be the paradigmatic philosopher if the coherence he tests for and tries to cultivate were not at least plausibly linked with knowledge or wisdom. Unsurprisingly, his principal followers, and most clearly the Stoics, actually identify wisdom with psychological coherence.²²

This adds some flesh to Socratic eudaimonism, but alas, it does not immediately solve the problem of advising fools. For a fool—one who cannot be helped by the advice that he act as a wise person would—surely lacks the wisdom of a coherent mind and is thus not going to be helped by the advice that he act so as to express and sustain a coherent set of commitments.

Fortunately, there is evidence that Socratic eudaimonists were aware of this problem. Perhaps the most striking piece of evidence comes in Seneca's 116th Moral Letter. Seneca is discussing the question of whether it is better to have moderate passions or none at all (Ep. Mor. 116.1), and he is addressing the concern that while it might be easy for a sage to live without passions, it is hard to see how one of us could do so (Ep. Mor. 116.4 and 116.7-8). He notes,

Panaetius seems to me to have responded elegantly to some young man who asked him whether the sage would become a lover: "Concerning the sage, we shall see; but you and

²¹ **NOTE:** concession for *technai*.

²² See Brown 2006a. It is true that Socrates disavows knowledge (Gorgias 509a) even as he also claims for himself some measure of coherence (Gorgias 481d-482c), but this does not require that he conceive of knowledge as something entirely other than the coherence he has. It would be well explained by his thinking that knowledge does (or at least might) require more of the coherence he has. In any case, Plato runs with the conception of wisdom and knowledge as coherence, insisting that wisdom appears only in the person who sees how things hang together as one (e.g., Rep. VII 537c6-7, Phdr. 270c1-2 with Brown 2003) and whose soul hangs together as one (e.g., Rep IV 443c9-444a2). Aristotle characterizes the knower as unpersuadable (A.Po. A2 72b3-4) and the wise as knowing everything so far as possible (Metaph. A2 982a8-9). The Stoics define knowledge—whether a cognitive grasp, a system of grasps, or a state of receiving impressions—as secure, stable, and unshakeable by reason or argument (Stobaeus II 7.51 73,19-74,1; Diog. Laert. VII 47; Sextus, M VII 151; Pseudo-Galen SVF 2.93; Philo SVF 2.95; and Cicero, Acad I 41-42, who attributes the account to Zeno of Citium).

I, who are currently far from the sage, should not commit ourselves to fall into a condition that is disordered, uncontrolled, enslaved to another, contemptible to itself. For if [our beloved] shows regard for us, we would be excited by the kindness; [but] if [our beloved] scorns us, we would be kindled by our pride. Ease in love hurts us as much as difficulty; we are captured by the ease, and we struggle with the difficulty. Therefore, knowing our weakness, let us remain quiet. Let us not commit a weak mind to wine, or beauty, or flattery, or anything that attracts us seductively." What Panaetius said about love in response to the questioner I say about all passions. Insofar as we can, let us step back from slippery places; even on dry ground it is hard enough to take a sturdy stand.²³

Panaetius and Seneca urge that precisely because a fool lacks the self-control that the virtuous sage possesses, a fool should turn away from love. At first blush, this makes it strange that Seneca quotes this advice to answer the objection that fools cannot easily live without passion. But as I explain more fully below, Panaetius and Seneca mean not that the youngster should extinguish his ardor, as if he easily could, but that he should turn away from love's typical behaviors to mitigate his desire's harmful effects. This advice addresses the complaint that it is difficult to live without passion by insisting that living as a sage, without passion, is not what a fool should try to do. Rather, a fool should avoid the situations and behaviors in which passions do their damage.

The attention to passion in this passage should call dozens of others to mind. Of course,

²³ Ep.Mor. 116.5-6 (trans. with some borrowing from Gummere 1917-1925): Eleganter mihi videtur Panaetius respondisse adulescentulo cuidam quaerenti an sapiens amatorus esset. 'De sapiente' inquit 'videbimus: mihi et tibi, qui adhuc a sapiente longe absumus, non est committendum ut incidamus in rem commotam, inpotentem, alteri emancipatam, vilem sibi. Sive enim nos respicit, humanitate eius inritamur, sive contempsit, superbia accendimur. Aequae facilitas amoris quam difficultas nocet: facilitate capimur, cum difficultate certamus. Itaque conscii nobis inbecillitatis nostrae quiescamus; nec vino infirmum animum committamus nec formae nec adulationi nec ulli rebus blande trahentibus.' Quod Panaetius de amore quaerenti respondit, hoc ego de omnibus adfectibus dico: quantum possumus nos a lubrico recedamus; in sicco quoque parum fortiter stamus.

the Socratic eudaimonists are aware of the problem of advising fools, because they see that fools need psychotherapy. Few themes are more prominent in the philosophical ethics of ancient Greece and Rome, and especially in the Hellenistic Age and after (see, e.g., Nussbaum 1994). So, for instance, Aristotle does not recommend that everyone simply imitate the virtuous person and habituate themselves into virtue. He says,

We should look at what we ourselves, too, are more carried away towards, for we are naturally carried away toward different things and this can be recognized from the pleasure and pain we feel. We should drag ourselves to the opposite extreme, for by leading ourselves far away from error we will come to the intermediate state, just as those who are straightening bent sticks do.²⁴

According to this advice, each of us should act not as the virtuous person would in our circumstances but as we need to act so as to become virtuous.²⁵

But this introduces an apparent shift in the structure of the Socratics' ethical theory. Perhaps the sage acts for the sake of eudaimonia simply by (partly or wholly)²⁶ instantiating it, but fools, who cannot do this, should act for the sake of eudaimonia by acting so as to become virtuous agents. The Socratics might accept some consequentialist eudaimonism after all!²⁷

In what follows, I argue that this is not the best way to understand the Socratics' advice to fools. I attend more closely to the Stoics' advice to fools to show that they mean to advise us to

²⁴ EN II 9 1109b1-7: σκοπεῖν δὲ δεῖ πρὸς ἃ καὶ αὐτοὶ εὐκατάφοροί ἐσμεν· ἄλλοι φὰρ πρὸς ἄλλα πεφύκαμεν· τοῦτο δ' ἔσται γνώριμον ἐκ τῆς ἡδονῆς καὶ τῆς λύπης τῆς γινομένης περὶ ἡμᾶς· εἰς τοῦναντίον δ' ἑαυτοὺς ἀφέλκειν δεῖ· πολὺ γὰρ ἀπάγοντες τοῦ ἀμαρτάνειν εἰς τὸ μέσον ἤξομεν, ὅπερ οἱ τὰ διεστραμμένα τῶν ξύλων ὀρθοῦντες ποιοῦσιν.

²⁵ NOTE: need more care with EN II 9, and need to respond to Curzer 1996.

²⁶ **explain this.**

²⁷ Cf. Hurka (citation).

act so as to approximate the virtuous agent and not (or at least not simply) to act so as to bring about our being a virtuous agent.

4. Stoic Psychotherapy

One large part of Stoic advice to fools is rooted in a kind of psychotherapy. Fools are, on the Stoic view, beset by harmful passions, and good advice will address this fact. But Stoic psychotherapy is widely misunderstood. It is often assumed that Stoics want to extinguish emotions. But the Stoics insist that the sage experiences emotions, just so long as they are good feelings: they target for elimination the subset of emotions that they call passions. Specialists recognize this, of course, but even they typically misunderstand the Stoic specification of passions. According to the usual interpretation, Stoics conceive of passions as false evaluative judgments and so conceive of the immediate aim of psychotherapy as replacing them with true evaluative judgments.²⁸ This is a double mistake.

First, although passions, according to the Stoics, are evaluative judgments of a special kind, they can be true. Cicero records an especially vivid case: Alcibiades feels distress (aegritudo) about his vice and desires to be made virtuous by Socrates.²⁹ Of course, by a Stoic's

²⁸ Even scholars who know better say that passions are false judgments. Compare Brennan 1998, 48-51, with Brennan 1998, 31. The former passage does an excellent job explaining what is wrong with the latter, and includes a fine discussion of Cicero, Tusc. III 77-78. For an apology, see Brennan 2003, 290.

²⁹ Tusc. III 77: For what shall we say—when Socrates, as we are told, persuaded Alcibiades that he was not at all a man and that there was no difference, though he was born in the highest class, between him and any porter, and when Alcibiades, distressed, tearfully begged Socrates to give him virtue and drive baseness away,—what shall we say, Cleanthes? Surely not that there was nothing bad in the cause which made Alcibiades feel distress? (Quid enim dicemus, cum Socrates Alcibiadi persuasisset, ut accepimus, eum nihil hominis esse nec quidquam inter Alcibiadem summo loco natum et quemvis baiulum interesse, cum se Alcibiades adflicteret lacrimansque Socrati supplex esset, ut sibi virtutem traderet turpitudinemque depelleret, quid dicemus, Cleanthe? num in illa re, quae aegritudine Alcibiadem adficiebat, mali nihil fuisse?)

lights, Alcibiades is vicious, his vice is bad for him, and it would be good for him to become virtuous. His judgments are all true. But he is experiencing the passion of distress nonetheless, and this distress is bad for him and could substantially interfere with his progress (by, say, discouraging him from hanging out with Socrates, who reminds him of his vice).

Chrysippus defines passions not as false judgments but as weak ones.³⁰ Weak judgments contrast with the strong judgments that a sage necessarily makes (Stobaeus II 7.11m 112,1-2). The sage's judgments are strong because they are all pieces of knowledge, that is, secure, stable, and unshakeable by reason or argument (citations in n. 22 above). So the strength of a judgment comes from its larger network of judgments whose contents are all inferentially related: all the knower's judgments hold every one of the knower's judgments in place, unshakeable by argument. By implication, the fool's judgments are all weak because the fool's network of judgments contains mistakes or gaps and so does not hold any one of the fool's judgments unshakeably in place (cf. Stobaeus II 7.11m 111,20-21). Even the fool's true judgments are weak, because of the network in which they are insufficiently held in place; they are shakable and

³⁰ See the canonical definitions of passions cited below, along with Stobaeus II 7.10 82,22-89,2 and Cicero, Tusc. IV 15: "The judgment that we have included in all the above definitions they want to be weak assent" [Opinationem autem, quam in omnes definitiones superiores inclusimus, volunt esse imbecillam adensionem].

insecure, outside of one's perfect control.³¹

All weak judgments are defective then, relative to the norm of knowledge (that is, virtue), but they are not for that reason all passions. Passions are an especially problematic subclass of weak judgments. Weak evaluative judgments of the form that "This is good (or bad) for me" or "That would be good (or bad) for me" are especially problematic because if they are "on-line" or "fresh," they motivate me.³² "Fresh" here is a term of art such that if I freshly judge that "This is good for me," I necessarily also judge that it is appropriate for me to act in a certain way because

³¹ Frede (1986) rightly saw that the way one judges is crucial to whether one's judgment is a passion, but he did not stress that this way is determined by the relation between this judgment and one's other judgments. He also wrongly inferred that the content of the judgment was not also crucial, as the Stoic definitions of generic passions (cited below) suggest they are. So according to Frede's Stoics grief is not necessarily the judgment, e.g., that Socrates' death is bad for me but can be the judgment that Socrates is dead, judged in a certain way. In fact, however, Chrysippus thinks that it must be the judgment that Socrates' death is bad for me, judged in a certain way (namely, weakly and, as we shall see, freshly). Frede overreaches from two pieces of evidence. First, based on an argument by Arcesilaus against the Stoics, he maintains that the Stoics understand judgment in such a way that the judger assents to an impression, and not merely to the propositional content of an impression. But Arcesilaus says, "If the katalepsis is assent to a kataleptic impression, then it is non-existent, since, first, assent is not to an impression but to rational content (for assents are to propositions)..." [Sextus, M VII 154: εἴπερ τε ἡ κατάληψις καταληπτικῆς φαντασίας συγκατάθεσις ἐστίν, ἀνυπαρκτός ἐστι, πρῶτον μὲν ὅτι ἡ συγκατάθεσις οὐ πρὸς φαντασίαν γίνεται ἀλλὰ πρὸς λόγον (τῶν γὰρ ἀξιωματῶν εἰσὶν αἱ συγκαταθέσεις)...]. His modus ponens could well be the Stoic's modus tollens (cf. Inwood 1985, 57). Indeed, there is independent evidence that in the Stoic account of judgments, one assents to the propositional content of an impression (Stobaeus II 7.9b 88,4). If some Stoics occasionally skipped this persnickety point and said, loosely, that one assents to the impression, Arcesilaus would have pounced. Second, Frede points to how powerful the way an impression is formed can be, as it must distinguish between whether an impression is clear and distinct or confused and obscure. This is right, but it does not show that the way an impression is formed suffices to distinguish as well between a passionate and dispassionate judgment that Socrates has died (cf. Brennan 1998, 46, minus his mistaken insistence that the passionate and dispassionate judgments must differ in truth-value). In sum, there is no good reason to think that Frede is right about the Stoic doctrine of the passions —it is a mere possibility— and there is good evidence for thinking that he is wrong. He simply takes too far his entirely correct point that the way a judgment is formed is crucial to the Stoics.

³² To judge that something is good or bad for me is to judge that it bears on my success. That is why the judgment has such motivational force. We can have other practical judgments that motivate with lesser force: we can judge that something is preferable in some way without it bearing on my success. Frede (1999, 75 and 92) and Cooper (2005) miss this, but see Brennan 2003, 283-290, and Kamtekar 2005, 222-224.

this is good for me, and I thereby act in that way.³³ If my judgment that "This is good for me" is not fresh, I do not judge that it is appropriate for me to act in a certain way because this is good for me.³⁴ Exactly how I judge that I should act and how I thereby act depend upon me: perhaps I merely swell inside with pride, and perhaps, like Albert Pujols, I clap my hands and point heavenward while I swell with pride. But if I am freshly judging that something is good for me, I am also judging that it is appropriate to act in some way because that thing is good for me. So Chrysippus defines passions in two complementary ways: a passion is a fresh, weak evaluative judgment of the form "This is good (or bad) for me" or "That would be good (or bad) for me," and it is the impulse (action) necessarily joined to such a fresh, weak evaluative judgment.³⁵ Understood in this way, passions outstrip my control (they are weak, and thus shakable, unstable), and they move me. This is why the Stoics also characterize passions as "excessive" and "contrary to right and natural reason."³⁶

³³ "I thereby act in that way" because a judgment that it is appropriate for me to ϕ just is an impulse to ϕ (Stobaeus II 7.9b 88,1). Notice that the impulse to ϕ cannot be the judgment that, say, Socrates' death is bad for me: to be the impulse to ϕ , it must be a distinct judgment whose content includes the predicate (Stobaeus II 7.9b 88,2-6).

³⁴ The connection to motivation is what distinguishes a fresh evaluative judgment from an "off-line" or unfresh one (Stobaeus II 7.10 88,22-89,3). This is another way in which Frede (1986) was right that a passion must be a judgment formed in a certain way, although again, the certain way involves the connection between the primary judgment and other judgments (see note 00).

³⁵ See especially the canonical definitions of the four generic passions (pleasure, pain, desire, and fear) at Andronicus, On Passions 1; Cicero's Tusculan Disputations IV 14; Stobaeus II 7.10b 90,7-18. Galen separates the definition in terms of an evaluative judgment (Galen, PHP IV 2.1) from the definition in terms of an impulse (Galen, PHP IV 2.5), but he presumably does this because he wants to insist Chrysippus contradicts himself. Inwood (1985, 146-147) suggests, on the basis of some silence in Andronicus, On Passions 1; Cicero, Tusculan Disputations IV 14; and Stobaeus II 7.10 88,22-89,3, that only distress and pleasure must be fresh judgments, and not fear and desire. But this misses Stobaeus II 7.10b 90,7-18, which attributes freshness to fear's judgment. We can also explain the (occasional) silence, if the Stoics assume that the motivational force of evaluative judgments about future goods and bads for me are more obvious (and less likely to wane) than the motivational force of evaluative judgments about present goods and bads for me.

³⁶ See Stobaeus II 7.10 88,8-10 with 7.10a 89,5 and 89,14-16, and cf. Galen, PHP IV 2.14-18.

By now, we can see the second way in which the usual view of Stoic psychopathology is mistaken. Not only does it misconstrue passions as false evaluative judgments; it misconstrues the therapy as the attempt simply to replace them with true evaluative judgments. Cleanthes might have thought something like this (Cicero, Tusc. III 76-77), which is why Cicero raises the case of Alcibiades against him. The trick with Alcibiades is not to get him to revise his evaluative judgments and to think that his vice is good for him or that becoming virtuous would not be good. Rather, the point is to break Alcibiades of the thought that he should beat himself up about his vice, for this is the thought that might cause him to avoid Socrates. Alcibiades' therapy needs to target not his passion but the most problematic manifestations of his passion.

Chrysippus seems to have favored this sort of psychotherapy generally. As Cicero reports, "Chrysippus thinks the main thing in consoling is to remove that [viz., the second] judgment from the mourner, if the mourner thinks that he is discharging a just and obligatory duty."³⁷ Chrysippus, in other words, does not try to remove a mourner's passion of grief—the evaluative judgment that something bad has happened, which (if fresh) necessarily prompts some impulsive judgment and impulse—but tries to change the impulsive judgment that it is appropriate to

³⁷ Cicero, Tusc. III 76: Chrysippus autem caput esse censet in consolando detrahere illam opinionem maerenti, si se officio fungi putet iusto atque debito.

mourn and thus the action of mourning.³⁸ If the griever would not mourn but limit his or her grief to the impulse to shrink (that is, to experience a sinking feeling), this will mitigate the effect of the grief, and make it more manageable. Of course, this is not the final goal for Chrysippean therapy: he wants mourners to progress to the point at which they accept the Stoic view that the loss of a friend is not something bad for them. But Chrysippus thinks that psychotherapy will not work unless it attends to a larger network of commitments than simply their belief about something bad. In particular it needs to attend to how intentional actions fit into this larger network.

This attention to actions and a broader network is what Seneca likes about Panaetius'

³⁸ Sorabji (2000, esp. 32-33) and Graver (2002, 90-94 with appendix C) argue that Chrysippus eliminates the passion of grief by removing the judgment that it is appropriate to mourn. This seems to me impossible: if there remains a fresh evaluative judgment, it must entail some impulsive judgment or another, and all Chrysippus can do is change the impulsive judgment and hope that by changing the impulsive judgment he can induce the evaluative judgment to go stale (and thereby extinguish the passion). Graver finds Cicero, Tusc. III 61 ad fin. and 68-70 especially telling, but I suspect that these passages represent some Ciceronian flourishes and not Chrysippus' view. Sorabji offers four reasons. The first, that a passion must involve both an evaluative judgment and an impulsive judgment (33), is correct, but it says nothing about the possible connections between these judgments. The second, that the evaluative judgment can be true but passion's judgments cannot be wholly true (32), misconstrues the defect of passionate judgments. The third, that the impulsive judgment is the main target of Chrysippean therapy (32, cf. 176-179) is correct but does not show that this side of Chrysippean therapy is supposed to extirpate passions. And the fourth is the evidence of Galen, PHP IV 7.12-14 (33, cf. 109-112): "Chrysippus also testifies in Book Two of On Passions that passions soften in time even though the beliefs remain that something evil has happened to them, when he writes thus: 'One might inquire also about the lessening of distress, how it happens, whether with change in some belief or with all the beliefs continuing, and why this will be.' Then, proceeding, he says, 'I think belief of this sort remains, that the actually present thing is bad, but when it grows older, the contraction and, as I believe, the impulse to the contraction lessen.'" (Ὅτι δ' ἐν τῷ χρόνῳ μαλάττεται τὰ πάθη, κὰν αἱ δόξαι μένωσι τοῦ κακόν τι αὐτοῖς γεγονέναι, καὶ ὁ Χρύσιππος ἐν τῷ δευτέρῳ Περὶ Παθῶν μαρτυρεῖ γράφων ὧδε: "ζητήσαι δ' ἂν τις καὶ περὶ τῆς ἀνέσεως τῆς λύπης, πῶς φίνεται, πότερον δόξης τινὸς μετακινουμένης ἢ πασῶν διαμενουσῶν, καὶ διὰ τί τοῦτ' ἔσται." εἰτ' ἐπιφέρων φησί, "δοκεῖ δέ μοι ἢ μὲν τοιαύτη δόξα διαμένειν, ὅτι κακόν αὐτὸ ὃ δὴ πάρεστιν, ἐγγρονονιζομένης δ' ἀνιέσθαι ἢ συστολῇ καὶ ὡς οἶμαι ἢ ἐπὶ τὴν συστολὴν ὀρμῇ.) Sorabji may be right to say that Chrysippus here links the fading of a passion ("the contraction") with the changing of the impulsive judgment ("the impulse to the contraction"). But I note that these occur as the evaluative judgment grows stale ("when it grows older"). So Chrysippus could well insist that the passion will lessen to the point of dissipation only if the evaluative judgment is so stale that it necessitates no impulsive judgment, and even in this case (which goes further than Chrysippus entertains here), the passion can be rekindled should the evaluative judgment become fresh again.

advice to the young man looking for love. Panaetius, recall, tells the youngster to turn away from love, not by magically losing his desire but by acting differently.³⁹ We can fill this out a bit more. The Stoics define both the passion and the "science" of erotic love in the same behavioral terms. For both the sage and the fool, erotic love is a kind of desire, "an attempt at making a friend on account of manifest beauty."⁴⁰ The fool experiences this erotic love as a passion, an appetite.⁴¹ The sage, on the other hand, experiences it as knowledge.⁴² It is plausible that the fool and the sage assent to the same propositions about making friends with a beauty, although they assent to them differently. One might easily explain the difference in terms of other propositions concerning which the fool and the sage disagree. Does the fool identify beauty as the potential for virtue, as the sage does?⁴³ Does the fool want as his friend a sex partner, or does he, like the sage, want a virtuous friend?⁴⁴ And does the fool notice, as the sage does, that erotic love gives way to the love of a friend once one succeeds in making one's beloved a friend?⁴⁵ Most fools experience love passionately because they err in one or more of these particulars. But even if the fool copies the sage in all of them, there is some weakness in the way that the fool loves, because the fool's love, unlike the sage's, is not secured by a perfectly coherent set of commitments.

³⁹ **NOTE:** cf. perhaps avoidance of money in Kallipolis?

⁴⁰ ἔρως ἐπιβολὴ φιλοποιίας διὰ κάλλος ἐμφαινόμενον. So say Stobaeus II 7.10c 91,15-16 and Diog. Laert. VII 113, in lists of passions, and Stobaeus II 7.11s 115,1-2, Diogenes Laertius VII 130, and Cicero, Tusc IV 72, in an account of the sage's love. For explicit acknowledgement that the definition of love applies to what both sages and fools experience, see Stobaeus II 7.5b9 66,9-13.

⁴¹ Both Stobaeus II 7.10c 91, 15-16 and DL VII 113 treat love as one species of appetite.

⁴² Cf. Stobaeus II 7.5b9 66,6-9.

⁴³ See Diog. Laert. VII 129-130, and Stobaeus II 7.5b9 66,6-8 and II 7.11s 115,2-4 .

⁴⁴ See Diog. Laert. VII 130 (cf. Stobaeus II 7.5b9 66,6-8), with the Stoic insistence that only the virtuous are friends: Stobaeus II 7.11m 108,5-25; DL VII 33; DL VII 124; Seneca, Ep 81.12; Philo SVF 3.634; Cicero, Nat D I 121; Clement SVF 1.223.

⁴⁵ See Plutarch, Comm not 1073a and Paradoxically 1058a.

So, first, it is unlikely that Panaetius would deny that a friend is good for one or that it is appropriate to want to turn someone who manifests beauty into a friend. These evaluative propositions are not the problem. It is the related judgments that are problematic, either related evaluative judgments or related behavioral commitments. Second, how problematic these related judgments are varies. If the fool is inflamed by physical beauty with a desire for a sex partner, he is in more trouble than if he recognizes the potential for virtue with the desire to make a new friend but does so without a perfectly coherent set of psychological commitments. Third, then, exactly what therapy the fool needs will vary. Panaetius is addressing someone he is sure is far from wisdom, and so he recommends sweeping behavioral safeguards. Such a person should not act like a sage but should avoid his or her beloved. But Panaetius might well, despite his rhetoric ("we are far from the sage"), allow himself to imitate the sage's behaviors and be moved by erotic love to try to make a friend.

This approach to behavioral psychotherapy, common to Chrysippus, Panaetius, and Seneca, manifests three commitments to keep in mind. First, Stoic psychotherapy addresses passions by locating them in a broader network of commitments, including especially intentional actions. Second, the Stoic sometimes recommends intentional actions other than the sage's. And third, Stoic psychotherapy shows concern for the psychological health of the patient: some actions are to be chosen, others to be avoided, with respect to the general orderliness of the patient's psyche.

But this third feature of Stoic psychotherapy might seem to push the Stoic away from Socratic eudaimonism—according to which eudaimonia is a certain way of acting and one acts for the sake of one's eudaimonia by acting in that way—and toward consequentialist eudaimonism—according to which eudaimonia is a certain state of affairs and one acts for the

sake of one's eudaimonia by trying to bring about that state of affairs. Perhaps the Stoics have a two-part ethical theory, Socratic eudaimonism for the virtuous and consequentialist eudaimonism for the rest of us. Consequentialist eudaimonism, I argued earlier (in section 2), is problematic for "virtue ethics," because it renders virtuous activity not valuable for its own sake but only for its consequences.⁴⁶ This is not as problematic, perhaps, as the worry raised in section one, that virtue ethics might be no alternative at all to textbook versions of consequentialism. But it does undercut some of the advantages "virtue ethics" likes to claim for itself. In the next section, I argue that this is not the best interpretation of Stoic advice to fools.

5. Approximating Virtuous Activity

First, consider how Stoic fools should evaluate their actions. All virtuous actions, on the Stoic view, are good for their own sake,⁴⁷ but no fool's action is virtuous or good. So fools should not value their actions as good at all, let alone good for their own sake. But this does not mean that fools cannot value their actions for their own sake, as there are kinds of value distinct from goodness and kinds of valuing distinct from taking-to-be-good. What attitude should fools have toward their actions, then? A distinction is needed. Some of the actions that fools perform, and thus some of the impulsive judgments that they endorse, are not those that a sage would perform and endorse, but others are. It makes sense that the fools should not value the former kinds of activities for their own sake but only for the sake of the psychological coherence that they might help to bring about whereas they should value the latter kinds of activities for their own sake. Of

⁴⁶ or because it severs motivations and justifications by using some two-level indirection to explain how the agent could value virtuous activity for its own sake.

⁴⁷ Stobaeus II 7.5g 71,15-72,3; Diog. Laert. VII 96.

course, when the fools do what the sage would do, they are still not doing anything good, and so they should not value the action as good for its own sake. But they can still value the action for its own sake, as value resides in anything in accordance with nature and not just with things in perfect agreement with nature.⁴⁸

It is worth remembering how much Stoic advice to fools tries to recommend activities that sages do. Consider the way the Stoics recommend appropriate actions, by saying, "The sage will ϕ ."⁴⁹ And consider their appeal to proverbs and other precepts that indicate the sorts of activities and concerns that are generally appropriate; Seneca's 94th and 95th Moral Letters are especially filled with these. It looks as though Stoic advisors try to inculcate favorable attitudes toward certain kinds of activities not for their consequences but just for their own sake, since they are generally in accordance with nature and thus appropriate.

These considerations tell against the interpretation that introduces consequentialist eudaimonism to explain Stoic advice to fools.⁵⁰ The Stoic advisor does not recommend whatever action best promotes virtue, just like that. Rather, he or she recommends acting as the sage would

⁴⁸ According to the Stoics, everything in accordance with nature has value, and things very much in accordance with nature possess much value and are thereby preferred. These valuable and preferred things can be valuable in themselves, for their consequences, or both, and while the canonical lists of preferred things do not include actions (Stobaeus II 7.7e 82,21-83,9; Cicero, Fin. III 56; Diog. Laert. VII 107), there is every reason to suppose that a Stoic would view appropriate actions as valuable, since appropriate actions are in accordance with nature and things in accordance with nature are valuable. The Stoic must have some evaluative attitude toward her actions, and Epictetus recommends to novices that they surrender all desire (orexis), the attitude one has toward something as good (Ench. 2). (I should also note that my discussion of the attitude an agent should have toward her actions assumes that the actions are already complexes of behavior-for-a-purpose. The fool can bake-a-cake-for-a-friend or stand-tall-on-the-battlefield-for-the-city, and in doing these things the fool might value not the baking but the friend's pleasure and not the standing tall but the city's survival, but the fool should view baking-a-cake-for-a-friend and standing-tall-on-the-battlefield-for-the-city as appropriate actions valuable in themselves.)

⁴⁹ See, e.g., the catalogue in Stobaeus II 7.11.

⁵⁰ There are kinds of consequentialism that can accommodate valuing activity for its own sake, but consequentialist eudaimonism is not one of these. (Peripatetic eudaimonism [see note 00 above] is, but that gives no support to the proposal that Stoics are.)

except where that would undermine one's agency. A better interpretation than consequentialist eudaimonism would explain how the fool is acting for the sake of his own eudaimonia whether the fool is or is not doing what the sage would do. I propose, then, that the fool is supposed to approximate the sage. In a way, this interpretation should be obvious, since the Stoics talk about some fools who are "progressors" toward virtue: they are coming closer to being sages.⁵¹ The natural interpretation of such progressors is that they more nearly approximate the sage than other fools do.

But of course approximating the sage is not merely a matter of approximating the sage's behavior. Sometimes, the fool, even the progressing fool, should not imitate what the sage does. Rather, the fool approximates the sage's activity by approximating the virtuousness of the sage's behavior. That virtuousness lies in the fit between the action and the sage's other commitments; it lies in the psychological coherence that makes the action unshakeable.

Again, though, the fool does not approximate the sage's virtuousness by doing the action that most nearly coheres with his or her commitments here and now, tested or not. What marks the sage's virtue is not merely coherence here and now, tested or not, but also its coherence under dialectical examination and its fit to the world even as the world changes. The whole network has unshakeability. So the fool should act in a way that most nearly coheres not just with his or her actual commitments, here and now, but also with the commitments he or she is likely to have under examination and in response to the changes in the world. Sometimes, especially if the fool is far from being a sage, the most coherent action will be something very different from what the sage would do. The sage will fall in love and pursue her beloved, but the fool, should he be so unlucky as to fall in love, should avoid his beloved. But sometimes, especially when the fool is

⁵¹ **citations**

nearing sagacity, the fool's most coherent action is the just what the sage would do.

This interpretation explains the details of Stoic psychotherapy and their broader advice to fools. It accommodates the concern for valuing some actions for their own sake and the recognition that given the psychological consequences, some fools should not do what a sage would and so should do something worth valuing for its own sake. It also recognizes a relatively straightforward wrinkle in the Stoics' Socratic eudaimonism: one should act always for the sake of one's eudaimonia, either by instantiating it (if one is virtuous) or by approximating it (if one is not).⁵²

This wrinkle is attractive for earlier Socratic eudaimonists, too. Plato's Republic, for example, articulates an account of virtue as psychological coherence (443d-e), an account of degrees of virtue (472c-d), and an account of virtuous action as that which not only expresses a certain state of mind but also sustains the (already virtuous) agent's psychological coherence or helps to bring it about (443e- 444a). This work explicitly encourages people to approximate perfect justice in their souls as far as they can. Recent scholarship suggests that Aristotle, too, countenances approximation as a way of acting for the sake of something (see Lear 2004), and this might offer the best way to make sense of how Aristotle generally favors straightforward habituation into virtue but nonetheless insists that fools sometimes need to do something other than what the virtuous would do. Perhaps the Socratics were moved to use approximation to evaluate and advise those who lack (perfect) virtue in part to answer a puzzle about Socrates, the puzzle of how he could seem so virtuous, could listen to others attribute virtue to him without demurrals, and yet could lack the knowledge that he took to be necessary for virtue. Perhaps

⁵² There are kinds of consequentialism that can accommodate valuing activity for its own sake, but consequentialist eudaimonism is not one of these. (Peripatetic eudaimonism [see note 00 above] is, but that gives no support to the proposal that Stoics are.)

Socrates is approximately virtuous.

With approximation, the Socratics can describe how agents should act from psychological coherence and to sustain psychological coherence insofar as they can. Since most agents—for Socrates and the Stoics, all actual human agents—lack perfect psychological coherence, we can only approximate perfectly virtuous activity. But to do this is to do exactly what Socrates did.

6. A New Formulation of "Virtue Ethics?"

"Virtue ethics," then, can find an answer to the problem of advising fools by following an ancient lead. To follow this lead, it must first trade its general principle (Act as the virtuous person would in one's circumstances) for a subtly different eudaimonist principle (Act for the sake of one's virtuous activity). It must also recognize two ways of acting for the sake of one's virtuous activity: one can act for the sake of virtuous activity as a virtuous person by performing a bit of virtuous activity, and one can do it as a fool by approximating virtuous activity. Finally, to give some content to this notion of approximating virtuous activity, and thus to give a contentful solution to the problem of advising fools, advocates of "virtue ethics" can identify virtue with psychological coherence and the approximation of virtuous activity with the approximation of a virtuous action's fit with the rest of the agent's psychological commitments, not just their actual commitments here and now but also the commitments that examination and changes in the world are likely to introduce.

Advising fools on this approach is very difficult and requires judgment. Some people will be better at it than others, and the best advisors will need to know the advisee very well. But

these results are exactly as they should be: advising fools is difficult and it does require judgment and knowing the advisee well. These difficulties should not be confused with the problem of advising fools. That problem has been solved, since "virtue ethics" can now tell the advisor what to consider and how to judge what the fool should do. Now, finally, the advisor knows where to look, even if things are dark there.

Although Socratic eudaimonism offers partisans of "virtue ethics" a way to solve the problem of advising fools, it is a further question whether they should adopt it, and I have not argued here that they should. Socratic eudaimonism faces its own challenges. First, it needs an account of psychological coherence. So every mental state must have or be reasonably treated as if it had cognitive content of the sort that can be tested for inferential relations with other contents. We must be able to distinguish and favor consistency over inconsistency among sets of commitments. We must be able to account for degrees of (in-)coherence in different sets, where more coherent sets display greater inferential support for their members. This of course requires accounts of the various kinds of inferential support—deductive, inductive, abductive, and practical—and of degrees of support in the non-monotonic (inductive, abductive, and practical) inferences. Moreover, Socratic eudaimonism needs some account of how some psychological commitments are responsive to the world and some account of innate commitments or at least tendencies to commitments to explain why there cannot be psychologically coherent people who are, by our pre-theoretical lights, wicked.

These tasks are daunting, and can easily provoke pessimism. To my mind, however, none of them is an obvious non-starter. I have tried to show that Socratic eudaimonism, unlike unrevised "virtue ethics," can solve the problem of advising fools, and I would like to think that it is worth pressing on to see whether Socratic eudaimonism can make good on its

presuppositions.

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