

# Galen and the Stoic 'Double Perversion' Theory

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## ***Abstract***

Galen argues that the Stoic view that children are immediately familiar with what is good is false. Chrysippus holds that when a person acts badly, this is so because her nature has been perverted, and that the cause of perversion (διαστροφή) is twofold: the influence of the companions and what derives «from the very nature of things». Children, Galen contends, rush towards pleasure and avoid pain without any instruction. Additionally, they become angry, which proves that the first natural thing is not a propensity to what is good, but to emotions. However, Galen grants that, although at the beginning children are familiar with pleasure and victory, when they grow up, they have a natural familiarization with the good. In this paper I argue that the Stoics have a reasonable way of replying to Galen's objection: since he admits that when human beings develop their rationality, a familiarization with the good comes about (such familiarization to the good being something natural), he implicitly grants that the inclination to the good is part of human nature. In my discussion I briefly deal with the first orientation of the human animal towards himself, and suggest that this is the first good; in fact, for animals the appropriate thing to do is to pursue the primary natural goods that guarantee the preservation of their own constitution. That initial good is not yet a moral good, but it is a necessary condition for the correct development of the person, which will foster the correct development of one's inclination towards what is appropriate in a moral sense.

***Keywords:*** Galen, Stoics, perversion, natural good, human animal, ethics

## ***Resumen***

Galeno sostiene que la visión estoica de que los niños están familiarizados inmediatamente con lo que es bueno es falsa. Crisipo argumenta que cuando una persona actúa mal es porque su naturaleza ha sido pervertida y que la causa de la perversion (διαστροφή) es doble: la influencia de los compañeros y lo que se deriva «de la naturaleza misma de las cosas». Los niños, sostiene Galeno, se precipitan hacia el placer y evitan el dolor sin ninguna instrucción. Además, se enfadan, lo que prueba que lo primero natural no es la propensión a lo bueno, sino a las emociones. Sin embargo, Galeno reconoce que, aunque al principio los niños están familiarizados con el placer y el deseo de ganar, cuando crecen tienen una familiaridad natural con el bien. En este artículo sostengo que los estoicos tienen una forma razonable de responder a la objeción de Galeno: dado que él admite que, cuando los seres humanos desarrollan su racionalidad, se produce una familiaridad con el bien (siendo dicha familiaridad algo natural), implícitamente concede que la inclinación al bien forma parte de la naturaleza humana. En mi discusión me ocupo brevemente de la primera orientación del animal humano hacia sí mismo y sugiero que éste es el primer bien; de hecho, para los animales lo apropiado es perseguir los bienes naturales primarios que garantizan la preservación de su propia constitución. Ese bien inicial aún no es un bien moral, pero es una condición necesaria para el correcto desarrollo de la persona, es decir de la inclinación hacia lo que es apropiado en el sentido moral.

***Palabras clave:*** Galeno, estoicos, perversion, bien natural, animal humano, ética

### 1. *Introduction: how good are humans by nature?*

Galen argues that it is not true that children have no natural inclination to pleasure and avoidance of pain<sup>1</sup>. He also notes that it is Chrysippus himself who points out that, even when a child has never seen or heard an example of vice, he will not necessarily philosophize (*PHP* V 5, 318, 28-34). What the Stoics are intent on endorsing is that humans have from nature inclinations (ἀφορμαί) towards virtue<sup>2</sup> and towards stabilizing their impulses<sup>3</sup>.

According to Chrysippus (as reported by Galen), the cause of perversion (διαστροφή) is twofold: the first is «the influence of the majority of people»; the second arises «from the very nature of things»<sup>4</sup>, a somehow vague expression that Galen rephrases later as «the persuasiveness of the impressions» (τὴν πιθανότητα τῶν φαντασιῶν, *PHP* V 5, 320, 17-18). This fits with the account furnished by Diogenes Laertius, who reports that the Stoics maintained that the rational animal at times is perverted (διαστρέφεσθαι) by the persuasiveness of exterior things or by the influence of companions, while the starting-points provided by nature are supposed to be «uncontaminated» (ἀδιαστρόφους)<sup>5</sup>. But Galen intends to show that, since Chrysippus only focused on the best part of the soul (i.e., τὸ λογιστικόν), he is unable to explain the origin of vice. Additionally, Galen objects to Chrysippus that, if children are from the beginning immediately familiar (εὐθύς ἐξ ἀρχῆς ᾠκεῖωται) with what is good, vice could not arise from causes intrinsic to themselves, but should only come from without (*PHP* 318, 20-30). Moreover, it cannot be said that children's impulses are governed by reason, for they do not have reason yet (*PHP* 316, 24-25).

Of particular interest is the fact that Galen challenges the Stoic thesis of familiarization (οἰκειώσις), according to which (i) the first impulse of the animal is

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<sup>1</sup> Galen, *De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* (*PHP*), V 5, 316, 28-320, 28, ed. De Lacy.

<sup>2</sup> Stob. II 7, 5<sup>8</sup> (II, 65, 8-9, ed. Wachsmuth). The view that human beings have a natural tendency towards what is good is also reported by other sources (Calcidius, *In Tim.* chap. 165; *SVF* III, 229. Musonius Rufus, *Diss.* 3, p. 9, 15-9, 16, ed. Hense). Seneca states that the well born is the person «well set up by nature for virtue» (*Ep.* 44, 5). Of course, this does not mean that virtue is given without qualification; as warned by Seneca, virtue will not simply descend on oneself and is not discovered by trivial work or a small effort (*Ep.* 76, 6). In Seneca's *Ep.* 120 the main subject of discussion is how humans have acquired the knowledge of good and evil (for discussion see HADOT, 2014, 15 ff. and GLOYN, 2014, 239 n. 19). See also Cic. *Fin.* III 23; he maintains that, even though all due acts (*officia*) originate from nature's principles and we are commended (*commendari*) to wisdom by the starting-points of nature (*ab initiis naturae*), one gets perfect rationality *only over time*.

<sup>3</sup> The technical Stoic term normally associated with the animal's inclination to what is good (ἀφορμή) also explains that Panaetius has claimed that the goal is living according to the ἀφορμαί given to us by nature (cf. Clem. Alex., *Stromateis* II 21, 129, 4).

<sup>4</sup> Gal. *PHP* V 4, 320, 1-2. On this see TIELEMAN (2003), 132-139; GILL (2006), 257-258, 385. Seneca renders διαστροφή by *perversitas* (*Ep.* 95, 34; also, *pravitas*, *Ep.* 50, 4; 122, 5). For discussion see BERNO (2014), 371-372; 378-379.

<sup>5</sup> D.L. VII 89. See also Cic. *Fin.* III 22-23.

not pleasure, but self-preservation and (ii) there is a natural orientation towards what is good. Galen denies (i) because children rush towards pleasure and avoid pain without any instruction.

Within the framework of his argument, the restriction «without instruction» (ἀδιδάκτως) is relevant since, in case there was instruction, one could argue that this inclination to pleasure is due to instruction, not to nature. But the fact is, Galen maintains, that there is no 'didactic training' responsible for that orientation towards pleasure.

He insists that thesis (ii) should also be rejected because in fact children get angry, which proves that the first impulse (D.L. VII 85: πρώτη ὁρμή) is not a propensity to good, but to passionate states (a detail that is observed not only in children but also in irrational animals)<sup>6</sup>. However, Galen grants that, although at first children are familiar with pleasure and victory, on reaching maturity, they have a certain *natural* familiarization (τινὰ φυσικὴν οικείωσιν) with the good (καλόν). Now, young children are rational, even though they are not rational yet in the sense that they can use their reason properly. Moreover, if at the beginning of a newborn's life the leading part of its soul is like a sheet of paper ready for being written upon<sup>7</sup>, one should assume that newborns have no concepts of what is good or bad yet, so that their souls cannot be perverted.

There has been a great deal of discussion about the issues treated in this paper. The central problem is the development of character. As suggested by Christopher Gill, a good starting-point is Cicero, who states that the first appropriate act (*officium*) is the animal's self-preservation in its natural constitution; the second is that the animal retains the things according to nature and rejects the ones contrary to nature (Cic. *Fin.* III 43 and V 24; 43). This process is described as a sort of necessary condition to grasp what is good: once this natural procedure of selection and rejection has been discovered, what can be truly called 'good' appears to the agent. This process depicts «an ideal pattern of development», which can culminate in virtue (but a successful culmination of this process requires the presence of a developed rationality)<sup>8</sup>. The development of one's character can be analyzed according to different levels; the first is that of 'primary natural things', objects towards which animals are instinctively attracted in the initial stage of their development. This being so, one should assume that the goodness a human being is inclined to by nature is its own self-preservation (or so I shall argue). Pursuing the primary natural things is an appropriate act for any animal. Now, if those primary natural things are pursued rationally, the appropriate act achieves what is suitable for the human constitution<sup>9</sup>. It is true that at the outset

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<sup>6</sup> Galen probably draws on Pl. *R.* IV 441a 8-9.

<sup>7</sup> Aëtius IV 11, 1-5 (Pseudo-Plutarch, *On the Doctrines of the Philosophers*, 900a-d).

<sup>8</sup> GILL (2006), 129-130.

<sup>9</sup> This, as emphasized by GILL (2006), 131, does not yet constitute virtue. In order to reach virtue, one must be able to attain a complete understanding of the good and that only can be acquired once one's reason has been (correctly) developed (GILL, 2006, 133).

of the human animal's life the orientation to its constitution (understood as a sense of appropriation of what allows oneself to function correctly) and the preference for those things that permit self-preservation are good for that purpose alone<sup>10</sup>. Nevertheless, this basic good can be considered a necessary condition for the correct development of the person, which will foster the correct development of our inclination towards what is appropriate in a moral sense. In *Fin.* V 43 Cicero argues that nature generated the *vis hominis* to enable us to acquire any virtue, which explains why young children without instruction are stirred by resemblances of the virtues containing within themselves «the seeds of virtues»<sup>11</sup>.

Graver, for her part, provides a detailed reconstruction of the whole process of character formation according to the Stoics. First, she contends, one's character and behavior are not caused by forces beyond one's control. We are responsible for forming the beliefs and habits we have, but again, one might suspect that this is possible once one's reason has been developed or during the very process of developing one's rationality. According to Graver, «Stoic providentialism asserts that the mind is geared towards the acquisition of correct knowledge throughout one's life»<sup>12</sup>. But as she clarifies, we are not born with knowledge, although we have innate tendencies which give us some guidance for a correct intellectual development; the kind of innatism related to these inclinations, I hold, should be understood as a dispositional innateness (i.e. the innate capacity to correctly develop one's character in the direction of knowledge rather than of error)<sup>13</sup>. Despite providence's beneficent plan, Graver underlines, we acquire many erroneous beliefs. In that process, «the persuasiveness of impressions» plays a decisive role, although the most interesting point in Graver's argument is the emphasis she places upon the fact that the native tendencies must be very closely allied with the points of view of nature<sup>14</sup>.

In this article I argue that the Stoics have a reasonable way of replying to Galen's objection: since Galen admits that when a human being develops his rationality, a familiarization to the good comes about (such familiarization to the good being something natural), he is implicitly granting that the inclination to good is part of human nature. In fact, as soon as we are born, the Stoics claim, we are familiarized

<sup>10</sup> GRAVER (2007), 152.

<sup>11</sup> See Cic. *Tusc.* III 2, where he stresses that «seeds of virtues» are inborn (*semina innata virtutum*) in our characters (see Sen. *Ep.* 120, 4: *semen scientiae*). *Fin.* V is not supposed to report Stoic doctrine, but this assertion is unquestionably Stoic. Moreover, according to Cic. *Leg.* I 44, nature has given us a kind of common understanding (*communis intelligentia*), so that we are able to identify the noble (*honesta*) with virtue and what is disgraceful (*turpia*) with vice. This 'intelligence' or understanding, «sketched or imperfect» (*inchoata*) is straightforwardly related to the Stoic thesis, attested by Seneca (*Ep.* 49, 11-12; 120, 30), that nature has not given us the concept or knowledge of righteousness, but rather «seeds of that knowledge» (the same idea can be found in Musonius Rufus, *Diss.* II, p. 6, 5 ff.; p. 7, 12 ff. ed. Hense). As suggested by an anonymous reviewer, in Roman philosophy the term *semen* is the original element (starting with Lucretius: *semina rerum* are the atoms). So, maybe Cicero applies a Lucretian (physical) lexicon to an epistemological context.

<sup>12</sup> GRAVER (2007), 149-150.

<sup>13</sup> GRAVER (2007), 175.

<sup>14</sup> GRAVER (2007), 153.

with what is naturally good for us and alienated from what is naturally bad<sup>15</sup>. The prescriptions that come from reason are part of human nature, and it is thanks to those prescriptions that a human being can recognize errors, vindicate virtues and carry out actions in accordance with these virtues. I shall briefly treat the first orientation of the human animal towards self-preservation - which at the beginning of the animal's life can be understood as a selfish feeling, but later can become an 'altruistic' feeling that is directed not only at one's own interest but also at the interest of the others. While discussing the issue of an animal's attachment to itself, I will suggest that this is the first good (both for human and non-human animals); for animals the appropriate path is to pursue primary natural goods that guarantee the preservation of their own constitution. As stated above, even though self-preservation can be taken to be the first good to which a newborn is inclined, that initial good is not yet a moral good, though it is a necessary condition for the correct development of the person, which will foster the correct development of our inclination towards what is appropriate in a moral sense.

My paper proceeds thus: in the next section (2) I contrast the Epicurean and Stoic view regarding what the newborn animal's object of desire is and emphasize the Stoic arguments against pleasure as that to which the just born animal is oriented. At this point I return to Galen's evaluation of the Stoics and show that he endorses the Epicurean view. In treating this, I present the Stoic arguments against Epicureanism as reported by Cicero, Seneca, and Diogenes Laertius to explain the sense in which I take self-preservation to be the first good towards which the human animal is directed. Next (3), I examine the presumably unperverted nature of the newborn before it is corrupted, and insist that the fact that the knowledge the human animal has of what is good in its first stages, even though it is a certain kind of knowledge, cannot qualify as a 'real good' in the sense of what is morally good. I also attempt to make plausible the idea that the animal's good in terms of what is convenient for its preservation and the good in a moral sense are somehow related. In 4 I explain the issue of the «persuasiveness of impressions» and provide some concluding remarks.

## 2. *The Epicureans and the Stoics on newborn animals' first object of desire*

Cicero (*Fin.* I 29-31) famously reports that, according to the Epicureans, as soon as each animal is born, it seeks pleasure as the highest good (*ut summo bono*) and rejects pain as the greatest evil (*ut summum malum*). The animal does this while it is still uncorrupted (*ipsa natura incorrupte*) and sound. By contrast, the Stoics, probably bearing this Epicurean account in mind, argue that as soon as the animal is born, it strives for its self-preservation. Both Epicureans and Stoics think that at some point nature is perverted. The fact is that, for the most part, human beings live their lives having their nature perverted, since perversion of nature arrives very soon in a person's life. Irrational animals are the only animals that live their lives with their

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<sup>15</sup> See ANNAS (1993), 148.

nature unperverted, and this is so because they have no practical life in the strict sense. In other words, they do not have the sort of life which is supposed to deal with what is bad and good in a moral evaluative sense for a rational being. If a practical life is related to a life where what is bad and good is relevant, non-human animals do not qualify as a type of individual whose nature can be perverted or modified in evaluative terms *vis-a-vis* what is morally incorrect. The basic assumption (both for Epicureans and Stoics) is that nature in its origin always is good and it can be a sort of pattern for what is good and bad.

Turning now to the objection Galen presents against the Stoic tenet that children have no natural inclination to pleasure, we see that he sides with the Epicureans (i.e., their view that the animal, including the human animal, seeks pleasure and avoids pain). Casting doubt on the Stoic view, Galen implies that human nature is not naturally good, thus implicitly opposing the stance that one's (still unperverted) nature can be a pattern of what is good or bad. The Stoic arguments against the Epicurean view that animals have a natural inclination to pleasure and avoidance of pain are well reported by Diogenes Laertius, Seneca, and Hierocles<sup>16</sup>. D.L. VII 85 probably provides the most clear and complete argument, usually ascribed to Chrysippus; at this point, my hunch is that the other Stoics are drawing on Chrysippus' argument (i.e. Musonius, Seneca, Hierocles and Cicero when reporting the Stoic view). In what follows I will present those arguments and contrast them with Galen's view.

The Platonic Eudoxus had already suggested before Epicurus that pleasure is that which, without question, human beings and all other animals pursue<sup>17</sup>. Epicurus went even further: he tried to show that pleasure is the *only* natural end by arguing that newborns, who are still free from any destructive influence of their own nature, direct their first impulse towards pleasure. Therefore, pleasure is not only a starting point, but also a final end<sup>18</sup>. The Stoics, for their part, denied that the *first* natural impulse was towards pleasure, or that pleasure is the final end of human life; the primary impulse of the animal is towards its own self-preservation<sup>19</sup>. Chrysippus' argument runs thus<sup>20</sup>: (a) the first thing one is familiarized with is both one's own constitution

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<sup>16</sup> Even Musonius Rufus provides an argument against the view that the first impulse is towards pleasure (*Diss.* XXIV).

<sup>17</sup> See Arist. *ENX* 1, 1172b 9-10 and, before him, Pl. *Phlb.* 11b, when he presents the view of crude hedonism.

<sup>18</sup> On this, see Sextus Empiricus, *PH* III 194 (Usener 398); see also Cic. *Fin.* I 29-31.

<sup>19</sup> A similar idea can be found in Musonius Rufus (*Diss.* XVII, p. 89, 5-8, ed. Hense). But see D.L. VII 148, where several Stoic philosophers (including Chrysippus, Posidonius, Antipater and Boethus) are said to have suggested that nature aims both at what is advantageous and at pleasure (τοῦ συμφέροντος στοχάζεσθαι καὶ ἡδονῆς), and that this is obvious from human artisan activity (ἐκ τῆς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου δημιουργίας). As LONG-SEDLEY (1987), II, 264-265 observe, there is no other evidence that fully confirms or explains this claim, and with some doubt they suggest interpreting the word ἡδονή as a very general term for «gratification» or «contentment». Although this suggestion sounds attractive, it does not solve the issue.

<sup>20</sup> For the sake of my purpose here, I just present the argument in a very schematic way; for detailed discussion of this passage see INWOOD (1985), 184-194 (who, in my view, provides the clearest discussion

(σύστασις; i.e. physical constitution) and the awareness (συνείδησις) of it. Since nature familiarizes the animal with itself from the beginning of its life, its first impulse is directed towards its own preservation (ἐπὶ τὸ τηρεῖν ἑαυτό). (b) Then a teleological explanation is introduced: nature has produced the animal and could have made it (b.1) alien to itself, (b.2) neither alien to nor familiar with itself, or (b.3) familiar with itself. The alternatives (b.1) and (b.2) are dismissed; in fact, it is not plausible to think that nature, after having produced an animal, would not have provided it with the necessary means for its self-preservation. If so, one might wonder *for which sake* nature produced the animal. Amid the teleological argument positing nature as the cause of familiarization, the objection to the Epicurean thesis is introduced: (c) pleasure only appears once nature seeks and obtains what fits the constitution of the animal. This being so, pleasure is only a byproduct (ἐπιγένημα)<sup>21</sup> and presupposes the familiarization of the living being to itself. The Stoics denied that the initial stage in the development of the animal was a natural impulse towards pleasure because the tendency to self-preservation is prior to pleasure.

Both Cicero and Seneca offer two interesting arguments to show this: before feeling pleasure or pain the newborns (*parvi*) want what provides them a certain welfare and reject the opposite. However, this can only happen if, as a prior fact, the animal is able to appreciate its own condition and fear its destruction. But one cannot desire something unless one has self-awareness, from which it follows that self-awareness is prior to pleasure as the object towards which the animal is oriented (*Fin.* III 16-18, 20; *SVF* III, 182, 189). Indeed, the animal tends toward pleasure at any time, but feeling pleasure for something presupposes having a certain awareness (*sensus*) of oneself.

For his part, Seneca contends that all living beings have a perception of their own condition; that is obvious from the way animals move their limbs «neatly and nimbly just as if they were trained for this» (transl. E. Fantham). No living being moves its own limbs with difficulty; so, since all living creatures do this as soon as they are born, it should be inferred that they 'arrive at the world' endowed with this knowledge (as if they were born trained). Someone might object that animals move their parts neatly

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of the issue). See also ANNAS (1993), 263-267; COOPER (1999), 434-444; KÜHN (2011), 270-279. Interestingly IOPPOLO (2013), 175, notes that if the distortion of reason is a moral-psychological process («un processo psicologico morale»), the representations that arouse passions must have as their object good or evil. From birth, Ioppolo holds, the child associates the concept of good with the representation that comes from healthy and useful things for its preservation. The problem with this view is that newborns do not have concepts yet.

<sup>21</sup> Clement, apparently evoking a Stoic view, points out that «the sensation of pleasure» (τὸ τῆς ἡδονῆς πάθος) is not at all a necessity (καθόλου ... οὐκ ἀναγκαῖον), but «the accompaniment of certain natural needs» (ἐπακολουθήμα δὲ χρεῖαις τισὶ φυσικαῖς), such as hunger, thirst, cold, marriage (this last «natural need» must be taken for granted to beget children; see *Strom.* II 20, 118, 7-119, 3; *SVF* III, 405). Pleasure has been introduced into life as a sort of «auxiliary» (ὑπουργία), but it is neither an activity (ἐνέργεια), nor a disposition (διάθεσις), nor any part of us. The most important philosophical antecedent regarding the fact that pleasure is a certain kind of ἐπιγένημα is Aristotle, who argues that «pleasure completes the activity not as the inherent state (ὡς ἡ ἕξις ἐνυπάρχουσα) does but as an end which *supervenes*» (ὡς ἐπιγιγνόμενόν τι τέλος, *EN* X 4, 1174b 32-33, transl. Barnes-Kenny).

because if they moved differently, they would feel pain. This being so, it is fear, not will, what moves them in the right way. Nevertheless, the Stoic takes this to be false, since actions performed by necessity are slow, while the agility demonstrated by animals comes from voluntary movement. Furthermore, animals strive to achieve their natural movement even when pain prevents them. Therefore, it is not fear that guides an animal's movement, but a sort of 'implicit knowledge' that, even in a pre-intellectual sense, allows it to be aware of its parts and functions. It is not the fear of pain that drives the animal because, even when pain is presented as an impediment, the animal strives to develop its natural movement (*Ep.* 121, 5-8). This positively shows, Seneca concludes, that the animal is not primarily pleasure-oriented; in fact, it carries out actions that involve pain (trying to stand, *e.g.*, the infant falls and rises again and again while crying), but it is through pain that the infant manages to achieve a degree of training that implements what its own nature demands of itself (standing up). It is not true, therefore, that the animal is primarily oriented toward pleasure from the beginning of its life: there are cases in which pain can accompany fitting training to perform what is naturally appropriate.

Both Cicero and Seneca clearly favor the priority of the animal's interest in itself, not pleasure; both pleasure and pain stem from familiarization (οικείωσις), understood both as a sort of self-preservation and self-recognition. Self-recognition seems to precede pleasure (in several senses: logically, causally and temporally), since before recognizing one's bodily self, one cannot know what gratifies or pleases oneself. Hence pleasure cannot be the primary impulse of the living being because it is something derived and therefore a byproduct.

Such recognition surely starts with the awareness of one's own constitution, which would facilitate control of one's own parts. However, this awareness does not mean that the individual has an intellectual understanding; when one objects to the Stoic view, asking how it is possible for a baby to understand such an intricate question, Seneca replies that what he argues for is not that the newborn understands a definition of its constitution, or that it knows *in conceptual terms* what its physical constitution is, but that it knows its constitution nevertheless. Indeed, an individual can tend towards what is good without being able to conceptualize the *notion* of good. It is a form of 'pre-intellectual understanding' that the animal has of its limbs insofar as it «knows» their functions (*Ep.* 121, 10-12)<sup>22</sup>.

### 3. *The movement from the unperverted to perverted nature*

If Seneca is to be trusted, in its first stages of development the human animal has a «certain kind of knowledge», as it were, such «knowledge» being a cognizance of what is convenient or good for its own survival. It is clear that this good does not qualify as a 'moral good'. Against the Stoics (and in line with the Epicureans) Galen

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<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, probably one should not be so demanding with the Stoics; if Cicero is right, what nature has in fact given us are only the «tiniest sparks of understanding» (*parvulos nobis dedit igniculos*). We are corrupted by our wrongful habits and beliefs (*Tusc.* III 2).



states that all children rush into pleasures and flee from pains untaught. In fact, he contends, they not only become angry, but they also kick and annoy, so young children have emotions and their first impulse is pleasure<sup>23</sup>. This behavior is also noted, Galen remarks, in non-human animals (such as quails, roosters, and «thousands of other animals»). This shows, Galen insists, that children seem to be familiar both with pleasure and victory, and when they grow in age, they have a natural familiarization with what is noble. Thus, Galen's reasoning attempts to make clear that familiarization, even though a natural phenomenon, is posterior to the natural inclination of the newborn to pleasure. As Galen wisely points out, it is true that as children get older, they carry out many actions in accordance with their *concepts* of those virtues (κατὰ τὰς τῶν ἀρετῶν τούτων ἐννοίας). When they were young children, though, they lived immersed in their emotional states, without worrying about the prescriptions that came from reason.

A Stoic, I claim, would have a plausible reply to Galen's reasoning: (i) If Chrysippus and Seneca could answer Galen, they would use the argument they actually employ against the Epicureans to reject the view that the animal's first impulse is aimed at pleasure (it is interesting to note that Galen keeps silent regarding those argumentative devices); (ii) if Galen acknowledges that familiarization is a natural phenomenon, he also should recognize that the inclination to good is natural in a human being. Of course, Galen is very careful to avoid associating familiarization with the issue of self-preservation, which is the core of the Stoic argument in the already commented-on passages by Diogenes Laertius (reporting Chrysippus' view), Cicero and Seneca. But if he accepts that humans can have a *natural* familiarization with what is noble, he needs to explain why this appears when reason manifests itself, not when reason is just a capacity that needs to be activated. Galen can reply that this cannot take place before reason is developed because without rationality there cannot be a concept of just or good. Even admitting this objection, a Stoic, notwithstanding, could say that for the animal to be familiar with itself (that is, for familiarization to take place in the basic, though no less important, sense of self-recognition) it is not necessary to be in possession of developed reason. In fact, this is an important detail in Seneca's argument. The usual objection, Seneca recalls, is that an infant cannot comprehend this complicated matter, and if it were true, all animals should be born (as) logicians (*dialectica nasci oportet*) in order to understand the definition of «constitution» (*ut ... istam finitionem ... intellegant*). Of course, babies cannot understand the definition of their constitution: «Nature is more easily understood than explained» (*Ep.* 121, 11; transl. B. Inwood). However, they can know their constitution insofar as they are aware of it. (iii) The interesting point addressed by Galen is the idea that when children become older and can express themselves better,

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<sup>23</sup> See Gal. *PHP* 316, 28-320, 28 (*SVF* III, 229a). This can be taken as part of Galen's argument against the Stoic view that an emotion is just one's reason disposed in a certain way: since children do not have reason yet (i.e. they do not have developed their reason), and in fact they have emotions, an emotion cannot be reason.

they can perform many actions following their concepts of those virtues. Of course, when children grow up and their rational capacities are developed, they are already capable of conceptualizing what is right and wrong. My point is that, even though the Stoics claim that nature provides us with unperverted starting points, they do not say that we are born having the clear *notion* of what is just or good. That is why it seems reasonable to assume that the first impulse aimed at self-preservation can be taken to be aimed at a certain kind of pre-intellectual good, which is a necessary condition for the person's character formation anyway in the process that eventually can culminate in the correct development of rationality.

The psychological Platonic view endorsed by Galen shows why he was puzzled (ἀπορεῖ) when trying to explain the origin of vice, and was unable to find out how children are wrong (ἀμαρτάνει). This passage (where Posidonius' position about οἰκείωσις is supposed to be presented) is useful to show that Galen's views on moral psychology presuppose the Platonic tripartition of the soul (i.e. a psychology that is alien to the monistic psychology of the older Stoics). In the last three decades or so, several studies have reconsidered the position of Posidonius and have maintained that he did not reject the psychological monism of Chrysippus<sup>24</sup>. This interpretation states that in all sources - *with the exception of Galen* - Posidonius seems to have always been considered an 'orthodox Stoic' in moral psychology. The problem in this case is that Galen is, most likely, the main source for reconstructing Chrysippus' and Posidonius' stances on moral psychology, and what Galen informs us of it is that Chrysippus held a (in his opinion counterintuitive) monist view that does not admit parts in conflict<sup>25</sup>. Indeed, Posidonius thought that Zeno and, above all, Cleanthes defended a psychological model based on the partition of the soul; according to Galen, Cleanthes describes the soul as an entity with two conflicting factors: λογισμός and θυμός<sup>26</sup>. In any case, if Galen would not ascribe to Posidonius a tripartite psychology (which he approves), his objection to Chrysippus regarding the Stoic inability to explain the origin of vice could not be understood.

The Stoic good understood in terms of what is convenient for the living being at the first stage of its life and the good in a moral sense are somehow related: if the human animal is not able to preserve itself, it cannot develop a flourishing life in moral terms. This is the way that the awareness the human animal has works as the very condition to determine any other posterior good. Human rationality, which is a crucial ingredient of human nature, should play a central role in the passage from childhood to adulthood. Interestingly, when one's nature is unperverted, one's reason

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<sup>24</sup> See especially FILLION-LAHILLE (1984), 122-123, 153; GILL (1998) and COOPER (1999), 451-455, 467-468.

<sup>25</sup> In Galen's view, Posidonius endorses a more reasonable tripartite position (see Clem. *Strom.* II 2, 129, 4). Despite the sophisticated arguments offered by the scholars just mentioned, I still believe that Posidonius must have defended a tripartite psychology (if it were not so, the three types of οἰκείωσις distinguished in this passage would not be understandable; maybe the issue can be solved if, as suggested by ISNARDI PARENTE, 1989, 2220, it's just a division of the faculties of the soul, not of its οὐσία).

<sup>26</sup> For a monistic reading of Cleanthes' passage, allow me to refer to BOERI (2005), 392-394.

is still not activated or developed. Thus, one's nature starts being perverted when one's reason begins to be developed. This sounds somewhat odd, but in part depends on the fact that, for a Stoic, having reason does not guarantee that one already has *right* reason. It depends on oneself to develop one's reason in the correct way<sup>27</sup>.

4. *The orientation towards what is good and the persuasiveness of impressions.*

*Concluding Remarks*

So far, I have argued that, against what Galen seems to assume, the Stoics are not stating that young children already have a *notion* of what is virtuous when asserting that infants have a natural orientation towards the good. Galen is right in pointing out that, as children grow older, they can carry out virtuous actions following their *concepts* of those virtues. Nevertheless, the Stoics do not imply that a newborn is able to do that when they claim that the natural orientation is towards the good. By their nature, young children only have the innate capacity to develop right reason, which will allow them (at some point during their development) to correctly determine what is good. However, according to the Stoics, all humans share a common rational background; if this is so, one could wonder how evaluative concepts could mean different things to different people. Epictetus' account can be helpful here: people need an education, not in order to teach us what is good and bad, but to teach us *to apply* our preconceptions of rational and irrational (and presumably of what is good and bad) to particular cases according to nature (*Diss.* I 2, 5; II 11, 1-11). Such a process of learning to rightly apply (i.e. «according to nature») one's preconception of what is good proves that one's natural orientation towards good is explained by the possession of an innate preconception of what is right<sup>28</sup>. Thus, what the Stoics mean is not that newborns have a real understanding of moral issues, but that until they have refined their cognitive abilities, they will not be able to *conceptually* recognize what is truly good and eventually practice it.

At the outset of this paper I pointed out that the kind of innatism related to natural human inclinations towards good should be understood as a dispositional innateness. Several sources describe the way in which the Stoics explain how a moral concept arises; for the sake of brevity, I will comment on a well-known passage where Cicero

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<sup>27</sup> The distinction between *ratio* and *recta ratio* is also stressed by Cic. *Leg.* I 23 in a supposedly Stoic context, where *recta ratio* becomes the tenet of *lex* (I owe this reference to an anonymous reviewer).

<sup>28</sup> Regarding concept formation, the Stoic empiricism should deny any form of innatism: for the sake of coherence, one might assume, the origin of a concept must be the result of a perceptual impression (for this view, see BOERI-SALLES, 2014, 129-131). The issue of preconceptions in Stoicism and how it can be said that they are «innate» or «inborn» (Plutarch, *De stoic. rep.* 1041e-1042a; *SVF* III, 69; ἔμφυτοι προλήψεις) has been widely discussed. In his pioneering book on Epictetus, BONHÖFFER (1890), 193-203, attempted to show that the Stoic preconceptions do not depend on perceptual experience, since they are limited to practical concepts. SANDBACH (1971), 22-23, 35 n. 12, challenges Bonhöffer's view by showing some textual evidence that indicates that *any* concept depends on experience (in favor of Bonhöffer's interpretation see HADOT, 2014, 10-11, 17, who draws on M. JACKSON-MCCABE, 2004). For a fresh discussion of the topic, see SCOTT (1995), 202-204, who defends a dispositional approach to Stoic innatism.

reports the Stoic account about concept formation (*Fin.* III 33-34), emphasizing that our concept of good arises by a sort of rational inference. In the context, this is explained by stating that our mind ‘ascends’ from the things according to nature to the notion of good. Now if in order to reach the notion of good, we need a rational inference, the awareness of the concept of good should be posterior in the human animal’s development, but that does not prevent the person from (i) having an inclination to the first appropriate thing (self-preservation, which can be taken to be a certain ‘good’ as well) and (ii) having such inclination somehow due to the preconception of good, which is a notion implanted in the person by nature. Hence, at the initial state of life, one does not need to perform actions following one’s *concept* of what is good (further, the Stoics do not think that newborns ‘perform actions’ in the strict sense: insofar as their reason is not developed yet, their condition is not different from irrational animals, in which there is not yet a distinction between good and bad). An implicit assumption of the whole discussion is that human beings are constitutively ‘attracted’ to the good, which does not mean that every human being will be a good person from the beginning (or even after the person has achieved complete rational development)<sup>29</sup>. Thus, the fact that one is constitutively attracted to the good does not mean that one will carry out good actions immediately after one is born; human beings, by the mere fact of being humans, have the *capacity* to theoretically identify what is good (when their rationality is mature), to distinguish it from evil, and eventually to apply what the agent takes to be good to action<sup>30</sup>.

My final point focuses on «the persuasiveness of impressions», the second cause of perversion of one’s nature according to Chrysippus. I propose to explain the expression by resorting to Epictetus, who cites it (*Diss.* II 22, 6: *ταράττη ... αἰ πιθανότητες αὐτῶν*) probably with Chrysippus in mind. According to Epictetus, the third area of study that philosophy deals with concerns assent (*Diss.* III 2, 2), and while stating that we ought not to accept an impression (which is related to the things which are persuasive and attractive: *τὰ πιθανὰ καὶ ἔλκυστικά*, III 12, 14) without examination, he evokes the psychology of action, according to which the assent to a certain kind of impression (impulsive impression) produces an impulse which culminates in action<sup>31</sup>. What Epictetus recommends is that one should avoid precipitancy while giving assent. However, the fool is incapable of distinguishing between good and evil, since by incorrectly using his impressions and incorrectly

<sup>29</sup> The first and most obvious attraction experienced by the human animal is the instinctive attraction in the first stage of its development (self-preservation, a kind of attraction which takes care of one’s condition as a psychophysical organism; on this see GILL, 2006, 130).

<sup>30</sup> Once more, Epictetus is helpful to better comprehend this approach: he stresses that the good is something innate, and suggests that when there is a «clear impression (or appearance) of the good» (*ἀγαθοῦ φαντασίαν ἐναργῆ*, *Diss.* III 3, 4), the agent cannot do anything else than give his assent, which means to assent to the propositional content of the «clear impression of the good».

<sup>31</sup> See Stob. II 7, 9 (*SVF* III, 169, 171, 173); on ‘impulsive impression’ as the sort of impression whose assent gives rise to an impulse and action cf. also Origen, *De principiis* III 1, 2, 11-12, and Epictetus, *Diss.* I 1, 12, 2; 21, 2; III 8, 4.

distinguishing between them, he is disturbed and overcome by false impressions and by their persuasiveness. The immediate effect is that the agent first believes that *x* is good, then that the same *x* is bad, and later that it is neither the one nor the other (*Diss.* II 22, 6; 25)<sup>32</sup>. Whoever has his cognitive abilities properly trained, on the other hand, will have his character well-disposed and will notice that the good is his own choice (or «volition»: προαίρεσις) correctly disposed (*Diss.* I 8, 16; 29, 1). One will have a good life only if one makes correct use of his impressions (a theme on which Epictetus frequently insists)<sup>33</sup>, which is dependent on the agent. Humans cannot remove impressions (φαντασίαι), but adult human beings can critically examine them, so as to reject those that have not passed the examination of (right) reason. Epictetus insists that nature has endowed us with reason to use our impressions correctly, which is nothing more than to examine and distinguish between them, and not accept any that has not been examined (*Diss.* I 20, 5-8). External things (τὰ ἔκτος) are the materials of our choice, and the only way by which the choice will attain what is truly good is not to have a special consideration for such materials: if one's own beliefs (δόγματα) regarding them are correct, they will make our choice good; if perverse or distorted, they will make it evil (*Diss.* I 29, 2-4). Ultimately, individual responsibility lies not in impressions, but in the correct use each of us makes of them.

Finally, if a fool is ignorant, what can be done to be aware of, and eventually reverse, that ignorance? If the peculiar task of the good person is to deal properly with impressions (i.e. to do what is «according to nature»; *Diss.* III 3, 1) and if one chooses the correct course of action when doing so, whoever makes correct use of impressions must already be wise. If this is not the case, one should think that the agent's own evaluation of an impression would necessarily be incorrect. However, when something good appears to a person, said good immediately activates the soul towards it, while when evil appears, the soul moves away from it, because «a soul will never reject a clear impression of good» (*Diss.* III 3, 4; transl. R. Hard). But, whose soul? If Epictetus is thinking of the wise person, there is no problem; but if he thinks that this also occurs in the fool's soul, the account seems implausible. No doubt, one needs to have true beliefs in order to be able not to reject a clear impression of good. Perhaps Epictetus is only pointing out the natural disposition that rational beings have towards good insofar as all rational beings are born with an 'implanted' conception of good and evil (*Diss.* II 11, 3-4), hence the agent will be completely rational when she is able

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<sup>32</sup> This is reminiscent of Medea, Chrysippus' favorite example to account for the weakness of character. On this see Gal. *PHP* IV 5, 270, 10-24; 272, 9-274, 26 (*SVF* III, 473); his purpose is to show that Chrysippus contradicts himself when he argues that emotions are judgments, for at the same time he accepts that although Menelaus had formed his judgement to kill Helena and drew his sword to do so, when he approached her, moved by her beauty and «because of the absence of tension and the weakness of his soul», he not only got rid of his sword, but kissed the woman and put himself in her hands. If this is so, Galen concludes, Chrysippus accepts the existence of a psychological conflict.

<sup>33</sup> See *Diss.* I 1, 7; 12; I 6, 13. Even 'the essence' of the good and the evil depends on the (correct) use of impressions (II 1, 4). For discussion, see LONG (2002), 85, 214-217.

to recognize what is good, at the theoretical level, and to act well at the practical one. Thus, there is an essential relationship between good as an object of impulse and good as an object of knowledge; but the impression of a real good, not of an apparent good, is the only one capable of setting in motion the correct impulse (which the agent translates into a virtuous action). That is why in the virtuous agent what is good and right reason coincide.

To Galen's question as to why «pleasure projects a persuasive impression as if it were good, and pain a persuasive impression as if it were an evil» (Gal. *PHP* V 5, 320, 18-19), Chrysippus could reply that, although pleasure *appears* to be good, the soul of the virtuous agent will never find such an appearance persuasive enough as to give assent<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> As Julia Wildberger pointed out to me, the sage never assents to persuasive impressions, only to cognitive impressions. I say 'persuasive' in a very general way to stress that the supposedly 'persuasive character' of a φαντασία derived from pleasure is something misleading (related to the seductive character associated with pleasure), and that the sage realizes that.

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