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LONELINESS AND BELONGING : IS STOIC COSMOPOLITANISM STILL DEFENSIBLE ?¹

ABSTRACT. In view of recent articles citing the Stoics as a defence or refutation of cosmopolitanism it is legitimate to ask whether the Stoics did in fact have an argument for cosmopolitanism which may be useful to contemporary political philosophers. I begin by discussing an interpretation of Stoic views on cosmopolitanism by Martha Nussbaum and A.A. Long and show that the arguments they attribute to the Stoics are not tenable in the light of present day philosophy. I then argue that the Stoics did offer a very different argument for cosmopolitanism which is both more interesting and more plausible in that it draws on a conception of human nature similar to Aristotle's and contemporary virtue ethics. Lastly I consider an objection made to their particular brand of cosmopolitanism by Martha Nussbaum, namely that a Stoic cosmopolitan life is devoid of personal affiliation and therefore unbearably lonely. I argue that this objection is in fact unfounded.

KEY WORDS: affiliation, cosmopolitanism, Martha Nussbaum, the Stoics

INTRODUCTION

The Stoics have been much cited recently in articles defending or discussing cosmopolitanism.² That this is the case should come as no surprise, as the name and the concept of cosmopolitanism have come

¹ I would like to thank William Wringe, Annick Jaulin, the members of the Bilkent Seminar Group and an anonymous referee for their helpful comments.

² Nussbaum, *For Love of Country, Debating the Limits of Patriotism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996); Nussbaum, 'Kant and Stoic Cosmopolitanism', *Journal of Political Philosophy* 5 (1997), 1–25; Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity* (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1997); Nussbaum, 'Duties of Justice, Duties of Material Aid: Cicero's Problematic Legacy', *Journal of Political Philosophy* 8 (2000), 176–206; Nussbaum, 'Compassion and Terror' *Daedalus* (Winter, 2003), 10–26; L. Hill, 'The Two Republicae of the Roman Stoics: Can a Cosmopolite be a Patriot?', *Citizenship Studies* 4 (2000), 65–79; A. Pagden, 'Stoicism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Legacy of European Imperialism', *Constellations* 7 (2000), 3–22; and T. Pangle, 'Socratic Cosmopolitanism: Cicero's Critique and Transformation of the Stoic Ideal', *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue Canadienne de Science Politique* 31 (1998), 235–62.

to us from the Stoics. However, with the exception of one article by Martha Nussbaum on Cicero,³ it seems the Stoics' arguments for cosmopolitanism have not been studied in much detail, a lacuna which makes a certain amount of sense if the point of quoting the Stoics is mostly to lend one's arguments a veneer of respectability by linking them to something old. If, on the other hand (as is certainly the case with Nussbaum) we believe that our own arguments benefit from studying ancient arguments, then it is worth studying these in some depth. My aim in this paper is to find out whether this attempt at philosophical recuperation is legitimate, that is, whether any of the arguments put forward by Stoic philosophers may be judged useful to contemporary philosophers interested in defending cosmopolitanism.

I do not intend this paper to be a survey of Stoic politics. Of course, there is no such thing as 'the Stoic view' on any given problem. Stoic views differ in the early, middle and late periods, as they do from individual to individual. Furthermore, 'Stoic views' such as they are tend to come as a package including theology, metaphysics, logic, ethics and politics. But given that very few people will accept Stoic views wholesale, it seems that the most interesting way of using their ideas in contemporary political philosophy is to examine individual arguments and see how far we can go along with them.⁴ So my question to Nussbaum and others is not whether their interpretation of the Stoics is careful and scholarly enough, but rather whether their readings of the texts yield the most interesting interpretations. I shall argue that this is not the case, but that there are different arguments in the Stoic texts, which, taken in isolation from other arguments, seem to offer a very good basis for a defence of cosmopolitanism.

³ Nussbaum; 'Duties of justice', op. cit. Although I found Nussbaum's approach to thinking about how the Stoic texts might contribute to contemporary political philosophy extremely useful, as will become apparent I disagree with several of her particular readings, and, more generally, about what the most fruitful Stoic arguments are.

⁴ In practice this is the course many contemporary interpreters of Stoicism seem to adopt, for example Nussbaum in the works already cited. This is true not only in political philosophy but also in other areas, such as the Stoics' philosophy of mind. See for example Richard Sorabji, *Emotions and Peace of Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) and Terence Irwin, 'Stoic Inhumanity', in eds Sihvola and Engberg-Pedersen, *The Emotions in Hellenistic Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998), 219–42.

In Section Two, I argue that the interpretation of the texts which Nussbaum, at least, relies on is not terribly useful, as it claims that the Stoic arguments for cosmopolitanism depend on a theological or metaphysical world view that we no longer share. A.A. Long, in his *Hellenistic Philosophy*,⁵ proposes that Stoic cosmopolitanism is grounded in the belief that there is an all-pervading ‘divine breath’ which unites human beings, so that it is our duty to love and respect its presence everywhere. Nussbaum’s own reading of this cosmology is Kantian:⁶ reason is divine, and therefore there is a spark of the divine in each human being which we must respect. One of the claims I defend in this paper is that this is not where we should look for the Stoic argument for cosmopolitanism.

In Section Three, I suggest a very different interpretation of Stoic cosmopolitanism which starts off from an Aristotelian argument (in spirit if not historically) but differs from Aristotle’s view in one crucial respect. The Stoics’ texts show that they seem to believe, like Aristotle, that human beings flourish as active parts of a whole, that the end of human life cannot be realised alone, but is essentially a matter of co-operation with other human beings. On the other hand, the Stoics do not share Aristotle’s rather unconvincing view that the proper forum for human flourishing must be the city state, as it exists ‘by nature’, meaning, amongst other things, that it is self-sufficient. As very few of us would be prepared to accept this aspect of Aristotle’s views, the Stoics’ argument, which explicitly rejects it, should be very welcome indeed. So I go on review the textual evidence for this Stoic argument, and show why it succeeds in improving on Aristotle’s.⁷

In Section Four, I address an objection. It has been claimed that with Stoic cosmopolitanism comes a kind of sad resignation.⁸ Paradoxically, becoming conscious that we belong with the entire universe, that every human being is important for us, seems to go together with the realisation that we are alone, that personal

⁵ A.A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics*, 2nd edn. (London: Duckworth, 1986).

⁶ Nussbaum, ‘Kant and Stoic Cosmopolitanism’, op. cit.

⁷ For Aristotle’s argument see the *Politics*, Book 1, Chapters 1 and 2; and for a recent discussion of that argument see Robert Mayhew, ‘Aristotle on the Self-Sufficiency of the City’, *History of Political Thought*, 16 (1995), 488–502.

⁸ Nussbaum ‘Kant and Stoic Cosmopolitanism’ and ‘Compassion and Terror’, op. cit.; cf. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Random House, 1929), Lecture II.

love—for family, friends, country—does not matter any more and that we ought to strive to give it up. If this objection stands, it has to be damning: for who wants a theory of human flourishing which says that the good life is necessarily lonely and loveless? My interpretation of Stoic cosmopolitanism in Section Three gives me some leverage against this objection. In answering it I differ, once again, from Nussbaum, but nonetheless come to the same conclusion—that Stoic cosmopolitanism is not incompatible with preserving one's personal affiliations. This will be sufficient, I think, to vindicate the Stoic argument.

DIVINE BREATH AND FRIENDSHIP: A WELL-KNOWN ARGUMENT REVISITED*

Plutarch, in *On the Fortune of Alexander* writes that

The much admired *Republic* of Zeno ... is aimed at this main point, that our household arrangements should not be based on cities or parishes, each one marked out by its own legal system, but we should regard all men as our fellow citizens and local residents, and there should be one way of life and order, like that of a herd grazing together and nurtured by a common law. Zeno wrote this, picturing as it were, a dream or image of a philosopher's well regulated society.⁹

The recurrence of the theme of world citizenship in Stoic writings has been well documented, especially since Martha Nussbaum's recent writings on the topic have encouraged a renewal of interest in the Stoics' political claims.¹⁰ The Stoics all believed that we owe moral allegiance to humanity in general, regardless of nationality. This allegiance, which the Stoics term 'co-operation',¹¹ operates at both the physical and spiritual levels as it includes the prevention of suffering,¹²

*Quotation from the Stoics are mostly from A.A. Long and D. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Passages from Marcus Aurelius, Plutarch and Epictetus not thus cited are my own translations.

⁹ Long and Sedley, 67A.

¹⁰ Nussbaum, *For Love of Country*, 'Kant and Stoic Cosmopolitanism', *Cultivating Humanity*, 'Compassion and Terror', op. cit. For some relevant Stoic texts see Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, IV, 23, VI, 42, XII, 36; Seneca, *On Leisure* 4,1; Epictetus, *Discourses* I, 9; Arius Didymus: Long and Sedley 67C. See also Plato, *Laws* X, 903b–d.

¹¹ Marcus Aurelius, VI,42.

¹² See for example Cicero, *On Duties* I, 28–29.

and the moral education of all.¹³ Some, like Zeno,¹⁴ and possibly Epictetus,¹⁵ believed that this should extend to political allegiance, i.e. that we should aim for a cosmopolitan government; some, like Cicero,¹⁶ that we should remain politically loyal to our state, while supporting humanity in every other possible way. Most, like Marcus Aurelius, seem to waver, regarding national loyalty as a contingent duty, one which might be swept away by fate and Roman Imperialism.¹⁷ This might be true also of Plutarch.¹⁸

Very little has been said, however, on why the Stoics believed in cosmopolitanism, and whether the arguments which supported their views are arguments we would still be able to accept. Nussbaum, in her paper linking Kant's cosmopolitan views back to the Stoics, hints that the source of cosmopolitanism might be this:

We should recognize humanity wherever it occurs, and give its fundamental ingredients, reason and moral capacity, our first allegiance and respect.¹⁹

It is certainly true that the Stoics seem to agree that rationality is all-pervading (i.e. present not only in human beings, but in the rest of nature) and that it matters – for the Stoics, as for Kant, reason and moral law are closely linked.²⁰ A.A.Long attempts to derive an argument for cosmopolitanism from the Stoics' belief in all-pervading reason: because human beings are linked together by reason—pneuma, or divine breath—it is senseless for them not to cooperate.²¹

Generally, the problem with such arguments is that *prima facie* they give no reason why the mere fact that we are all human, or even all rational, should entail that we should respect each other and work together towards the same goal. After all, we do not expect that all cats should live peacefully in a big brotherhood of cats, even though they all are cats.

¹³ Marcus Aurelius, VIII 59, VII 22.

¹⁴ See footnote 8.

¹⁵ Epictetus, *Discourses* I, 9.

¹⁶ Cicero, *On Duties*, I, 57.

¹⁷ For example contrast I, 5, IV, 3 and 4, XII, 36 with VI, 39 and 44 of the *Meditations*.

¹⁸ Plutarch, *On Exile* 8, 602b.

¹⁹ Nussbaum, 'Kant and Stoic Cosmopolitanism', op. cit., 7. See also Nussbaum, 'Duties of Justice', op. cit. 183–5.

²⁰ Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* VII, 9; Cicero, *Republic*, 3.33; Arius Didymus, 67C.

²¹ Long, op. cit., 163.

One way in which the Stoics appear to fill this gap in the argument is by providing a cosmic metaphysics in which reason is both all-pervading and divine.²² Because reason is especially manifest in humans, these have special value, and we should all recognise the divine spark in every other member of the species and treat them as such. However, appealing to the divine in order to infuse humanity with value is not necessarily the most convincing contemporary argument for the claim that we should respect all humanity. If one does not believe that there is such a thing as the divine, there is no further possibility of supporting the argument. And if one does, one might still hope to convince an atheist colleague without converting him or her first.

Although the Stoics do believe that reason is divine, and that it is all-pervading, with an especially strong presence in human beings, it is not convincing that they regard this as an argument for cosmopolitanism. Nussbaum and Long infer that there must be an argument linking the Stoics' beliefs in divine reason and in cosmopolitanism – but neither quotes a passage in which that argument is presented. Indeed, I believe a case may be made for the contrary claim, namely that the Stoics believe the presence of the divine in human beings gives us reasons to treat people differently: just as reason is more strongly present in a human being than, say, in a potato, some human beings partake in the divine more than others, namely the virtuous. Greek and Roman Stoics seem to concur that this is sufficient ground for our preferring the friendship of the virtuous to that of the non-virtuous. Indeed, they claim that the non-virtuous cannot form friendships at all.²³

Premises which lead to the conclusion that only some human beings are capable of forming an attachment to other human beings – because themselves worthy of friendship – probably should not be expected to yield also the conclusion that we should love and respect all human beings just because they are human. Marcus Aurelius goes so far as to say that non-virtuous humans should be tolerated, cared for and also instructed²⁴ – but his seems to be the most charitable

²² On Stoic reason as 'divine breath', see Tad Brennan, 'The Old Stoic Theory of the Emotions', in eds Sihvola and Engberg-Pedersen, *op. cit.*, 21–70.

²³ See Diogenes Laertius, VII 32-3; 122; 124; Marcus Aurelius II,1; III, 4; V, 30.

²⁴ Marcus Aurelius, VIII, 59 and VII, 22. Troels Engberg-Pedersen discusses Marcus's attitude towards those he judges to be inferior in 'Marcus Aurelius on the Emotions', in eds Sihvola and Engberg-Pedersen, *op. cit.*, 305–38, pp. 330–4.

view. In any case, he does not appear to believe that the presence of reason alone makes a person worthy of love. And if observing that a person, whilst rational, is not sufficiently so (i.e. not virtuous) can cause us to experience a kind of disdain and aversion for that person, then the fact that we are all rational cannot suffice to justify the belief that human beings should respect each other and work together towards the same goal. Yet Marcus fully supports the view, as indeed the harsher Stoics do, that we must co-operate with all other human beings, regardless of whether they are virtuous or not. It seems, then, that this duty to cooperate does not arise from an attachment to each being in whom reason is observed.²⁵

The Divine Breath argument proposed by Long, and given in a slightly different form by Nussbaum, is therefore unsatisfactory for two reasons. First, it fails to convince a modern reader who does not necessarily buy into the kind of theism which the Stoics believed in – or indeed into any kind of theism. Second, it does not seem that this argument actually convinced the Stoics either, as they appeared to believe that how much reason one possessed made a difference to how one should be treated. I believe that these are sufficient reasons, if not for rejecting the divine breath interpretation of Stoic cosmopolitanism outright, then at least for asking whether there might not be another Stoic argument for this view.

We should, of course, be suspicious of readings which encourage a pick and choose attitude to Stoic doctrine. There is a sense in which Stoic philosophy is indivisible – the logic, metaphysics and ethics are all interdependent. But the interpretation I am putting forward does not claim that Stoic cosmopolitanism is independent of the rest of Stoic doctrine. My claim is both weaker and more complex. First, I am saying that Stoic cosmopolitanism is not directly dependent on one particular metaphysical claim. Second, I think the argument which they offer, and which I discuss in the following section, is strong enough to be self-standing – not that what the Stoics proposed was in fact self-standing. It is possible for the same argument to be supported in very different ways, and this is what I am about to suggest regarding the argument for cosmopolitanism found in the Stoic texts, i.e. ask whether that argument is plausible in its own terms, independently of Stoic cosmology. I shall argue that it is.

²⁵ Marcus Aurelius, VI, 42.

A SECOND ARGUMENT FOR BELONGING: ARISTOTELIAN TELEOLOGY WITH A STOIC TWIST

Given that according to the Stoics themselves, noticing that another person is rational is not enough to inspire the kind of sentiment that will lead us to respect them, what other argument do they give in support of cosmopolitanism? When the Stoics discuss human nature, they do not stop at a description of the role of reason and the emotions. Like Aristotle, they go further, and posit a concept of the human good and a theory about how that good is attainable within a human life:

It is satisfaction to a man to do the proper works of a man. Now it is a proper work of a man to be benevolent to his own kind, to despise the movements of the senses, to form a just judgement of plausible appearances, and to take a survey of the nature of the universe and of the things which happen in it.²⁶

Closer study of the ‘sociableness’ of the universe²⁷ and of human beings in particular leads Marcus to remark that individual human beings are to the entire human community as a limb (melos) to a body, which by its nature contributes to the good of the whole as its own good, and not just a part (meros) which may either participate in the activity of the whole or act independently (VII, 13). A person acting as a mere part would be as hand which has been cut off – dead and useless (VIII, 34).²⁸

Cicero gives us a slightly different interpretation of the same metaphor.²⁹ According to him, if we are to the human community as a limb to a body, then we cannot turn on another member of that community for our own benefit; but apart from that, it is acceptable that each should seek their own benefit first. It is not clear whether the analogy supports that claim, at least not in a strong sense. To be part of a community as a limb is part of a body means that we should pay at least as much attention to the good of the whole as to our personal good, since private good depends on the good of the whole. It is in the hand’s interest that the heart should survive, so that we may protect our heart from a projectile with our hand, even though

²⁶ *Meditations* VIII, 26. See also IV, 44, and compare to Aristotle’s *ergon* argument in *Nicomachean Ethics* 1097b24.

²⁷ Marcus Aurelius V, 30.

²⁸ See also Epictetus, *Discourses*, II, 10. Again, this rhetoric can also be found in Aristotle: see *Politics* Book I 1253a18–28.

²⁹ *On Duties* III, 22.

the hand will be hurt. If our hand had any choice in the matter, it would make sense for it to choose being hurt and protect the heart, as it could not survive if the heart stopped working. Cicero is, of course, as Nussbaum showed in her paper, trying to save property rights from the threat of putative duties to assist those who are in need.³⁰ But his more moderate view allows us to embrace co-operation without threatening anti-individualistic implications.

The Roman Stoics appear to believe, then, that human nature is sociable in the strong sense—that in order to flourish, a human being must be a full member of the human community, i.e. refrain from harming other human beings, and if possible, contribute to the good of the human community by working with others.³¹

Now we are dealing with claims that may be more palatable to the modern mind than the previous appeal to divine reason was, in particular because contemporary virtue ethics seem to have revived and given credibility to certain kinds of teleological argument in ethics.³² The Stoics appear to be offering some variation on the well-worn argument that, as we are by nature sociable, and cannot survive alone, it simply goes against nature (and therefore impedes the flourishing of the individual who so acts) to fail to co-operate with others. But the conclusion of the argument is not well-worn – for the Stoics do not settle for any political arrangement that organises a given number of people in the fairest possible way. For the Stoics, human sociability can be fulfilled only in a community which encompasses the whole of human society.

Its conclusion, a part of, the structure of this argument, it has to be noted, is similar to Aristotle's in Book I of the *Politics*. Aristotle wants to show that the state exists by nature. Individuals, he says, can flourish only within a state, as no other form of association is self-sufficient; the state thus allows human beings to function in the way that is proper for them, i.e. physically, socially and politically. More importantly, life in the state allows one to develop virtues which are proper to humanity, through engagement in political deliberation.³³

³⁰ Nussbaum, 'Duties of Justice', op. cit.

³¹ Marcus Aurelius VI, 39, 42, VIII, 59; Cicero *On Duties* I, 22.

³² See for example R. Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Michael Slote, *Morals from Motives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001): although Slote's virtue ethics is more Platonic than Aristotelian, they still embrace some kind of teleology.

³³ *Politics* Book I, 1253a18–29.

To the modern reader, Aristotle's notion that the state is self-sufficient is puzzling – even though modern states are spread over much larger territories than the ancient city states were. No state today is self-sufficient either in terms of physical resources, or of social and political needs. And it is hard to believe that even Greek city-states were ever self-sufficient. Athens certainly was not, as its survival was linked to that of its empire. There are of course more charitable and subtle readings of Aristotle's self-sufficiency clause, which I shall turn to later in this section. First, however, I shall show that what the Stoics, Greek and Roman, have to offer is a version of Aristotle's view that man is a political animal which needs to be part of a political community, not only in order to survive, but also in order to flourish, without incorporating the implausible claim that the city is self-sufficient and therefore natural.

In fact, the Stoics offer both a refutation of the Aristotelian claim that the state is natural and an argument for the view that the entire community of human beings is the proper community for full human functioning. The latter is again an appeal to divine reason, and as such not terribly convincing. However, if the Stoics embrace Aristotle's view that human beings can flourish only by co-operating with other human beings, and if, moreover, they believe that the city-state is no more 'natural' than the family or village as a human association, then it follows that in order to flourish, human beings must live as co-citizens with all other human beings. The further argument is thus unnecessary.

The clearest statement of the argument against the view that the city state is natural – and at the same time of the argument that the cosmos is the only real city and therefore the proper focus of our moral and political obligation—is probably this passage from Epictetus:

Never in reply to the question, to what country you belong, say that you are an Athenian or a Corinthian, but that you are a citizen of the world. For why do you say that you are an Athenian, and why do you not say that you belong to the small nook only into which your poor body was cast at birth? Is it not plain that you call yourself an Athenian or Corinthian from the place which has a greater authority and comprises not only that small nook itself and all your family, but even the whole country from which the stock of your progenitors is derived down to you? He then who has observed with intelligence the administration of the world, and has learned that the greatest and supreme and the most comprehensive community is that which is composed of men and God, and that from God have descended the seeds not only to my father and grandfather, but to all beings which are generated on the earth and are produced, and particularly to rational beings – for these only

are by their nature formed to have communion with God, being by means of reason conjoined with Him – why should not such a man call himself a citizen of the world, why not a son of God, and why should he be afraid of anything which happens among men?³⁴

If to belong to a particular place, and therefore community, is to have been born there, Epictetus says, then we might as well say we are from the exact spot where we were born. If, on the other hand, the purpose of claiming allegiance with one particular part of the world is to assert the links between oneself and one's ancestry, then claiming to belong to a state is probably not adequate. There must be very few people, then as today, who can claim an ancestry which is exclusively situated in their own birth country; at the very least, they will have to plead ignorance at times. One's place of belonging would thus be either a bed in a specific part of a town, or a geographical area defined by the places of birth of one's ancestors. Either way, it probably won't make sense for anyone to claim that they are 'Athenian', 'French' or 'American'. This arbitrariness of national belonging is reflected by Plutarch in *On Exile*.³⁵

By Nature, as Aristo said, there is no native land just as there is no house or cultivated field, smithy, or doctor's surgery; each one of these comes to be so, or rather, is so named and called, always in relation to the occupant and user.³⁶

So to define oneself as belonging to a particular city, state or country is not to say anything deep enough about oneself to infer who or what we owe allegiance to. In other words, the Stoics say, there are no grounds for being patriotic at the expense of the welfare of people who happen to live elsewhere. It remains that if there is a community of human beings, and that if belonging to it in the strong sense (i.e. being a member or limb rather than a part) is crucial to flourishing, then that community cannot be anything smaller than the entire world. In other words the argument is that our allegiance cannot be geographically grounded: so no geographically identified community can replace the Aristotelian city—other than the entire world, which

³⁴ *Discourses*, I, 9.

³⁵ See also Seneca, who refers to our nation states as 'The other, the one to which we have been assigned by the accident of our birth': *On Leisure*, Book IV, Chapter 1.

³⁶ *On Exile* 600e.

has no geographical boundaries—in order for flourishing to take place.³⁷ We do not need Epictetus's further appeal to god and reason in order to draw that conclusion: the refutation of Aristotle's claim that city-states are the natural forum for human flourishing, together with the acceptance of his claim that human beings are essentially social and political, is enough.³⁸

Granted that the Stoics can offer an Aristotelian view that is also cosmopolitan, one might still be unhappy with the rejection of Aristotle's city-centered view, on the grounds that it was based on an uncharitable, unsubtle reading of the self-sufficiency claim. To make the Stoics' view convincing, we must show that it is preferable even to a more subtle reading of Aristotle. In order to understand what Aristotle means by his claim that the city is self-sufficient—unlike the family unit, or the village structure—we must turn back to his conception of flourishing, and ask what it is about the city which enables flourishing better than the family or the village; and then, whether it does this better or worse than a cosmopolitan political organisation would. Only then we will have a fairer appreciation of the conflict between Aristotle and Stoic Cosmopolitanism.³⁹

The kind of political participation envisaged by Aristotle is direct: it involves debating and decision-making, and taking it in turns to implement these decisions. The effect is threefold. First, one is encouraged to engage in philosophical dialogue on moral and political issues; second, we have a say in how we will be governed, and

³⁷ We could also say that if allegiance cannot be geographically grounded, then we owe allegiance to nowhere in particular. The group of people to whom we owe allegiance would then have to be picked according to criteria other than geographical – such as belonging to the same family, religion or political association. But it seems that if we start off by accepting, with the Stoics, that in order to flourish we must regard ourselves as a member of humankind in general, and if we remove geographical barriers, we would not be justified in then positing different barriers. We would have to conclude that we owe allegiance to the world at large. Thanks to an anonymous referee for pointing out this problem.

³⁸ Arius Didymus presents an argument similar to the second part of the one in the Epictetus passage quoted above, where he appeals to the idea that gods rule over the world and that therefore the world as a whole is like a city—Long and Sedley, *op. cit.*, 67.

³⁹ Here I am taking certain liberties with the Stoics, as they mostly saw cosmopolitanism as a matter of moral, rather than political, allegiance. However, these days it seems that international moral matters are more efficiently dealt with by international political organisations, even if some of those are not affiliated to any government.

more than that, actually govern ourselves; and third, we are forced to come to a realisation that we belong to a community, and that to sustain ourselves we must sustain the community.

In some sense it is clear that the city-state is especially well-suited for this kind of involvement. If there is but a small number of citizens (excluding, as Aristotle did, women, slaves, foreigners and people who need to work) it is easy for them to meet and discuss in depth and at leisure the problems at hand. In a larger, cosmopolitan, political arena it is not the case that complete dialogue can be established: no citizen will know what every other citizen has to say and be able to respond to it. Decision-making and self-government is also affected. In a world-sized state an individual vote would weigh almost nothing, so there would be no sense, even in a democracy, of being in charge of our destinies. On the other hand, belonging to a human community is what Stoic cosmopolitanism is about: to transcend one's national affiliation is necessary for realising that one belongs to a human community *qua* being human, as opposed to a French community *qua* speaking French or living in France. Patriotism or nationalism of a certain kind prevent this full realisation from taking place. Nussbaum writes that we sometimes fail to realise that people in other countries are fully human;⁴⁰ we can go further: until we realise that they are like us and belong with us, we fail to realise that *we* are fully human.

On the third point, the full realisation of our nature as belonging to a community, a cosmopolitan society is clearly better suited for human flourishing than the city-state. The city-state seems *prima facie* better suited than the cosmopolitan society on the first and second point; but on closer inspection it turns out that this is not the case. We at first said that political dialogue was more likely to take place in the smaller environment of the city-state. However, this is to ignore the technological developments which have enabled people all over the world to communicate cheaply and efficiently about anything they want. Many leading newspapers set up internet discussion groups on news topics, as well as opinion polls, and there are many independent discussion groups. Moreover, many of the political issues that affect citizens of any country are international issues, and not to treat them as such is to address them superficially, and with potentially dire consequences. Issues that come

⁴⁰ Nussbaum, 'Compassion and Terror', op. cit.

immediately to mind are environmental issues and those of post-colonial politics.⁴¹

The issue of self-government may at first seem more vexed, as the individual would tend to be lost in an international political context. However, what seems to count in Aristotle is that one should take an active part in decision-making. Imagine a committee in which the votes are unequally weighed. One member's vote counts for five, but she does not take part in any discussion of the issue that was being voted on. Another member's vote counts for one, but she actively discusses the issue and tries to persuade others to adopt her point of view. It is arguable that this apparently less powerful member is nonetheless more in charge of her own destiny than the one whose vote counts for more. In a world where votes were equally balanced and each person took part in some discussion group regarding the political issues that they had to vote on, it is arguable that, no matter how many citizens there were, they would be engaged in self-government.

In fact, then, a cosmopolitan city is not less suited to human flourishing than an Aristotelian city-state would be; and even on a more charitable reading of Aristotle's self-sufficiency claim, the Stoic view comes out as the more plausible. However, there remains an objection to be considered, and one which may make us feel that, although plausible, we should not be keen to embrace the Stoic view. I consider this objection in the following two sections.

STOIC RESIGNATION AND LONELINESS: AN OBJECTION

Nussbaum makes the following comment on Stoic cosmopolitanism:

For getting to the point where we can give such concern evenhandedly to all human beings requires, as Marcus makes abundantly clear, the systematic extirpation of intense cares and attachments directed at the local: one's family, one's city, the objects of one's love and desire. ... all this leads us into a strange world, a world that is gentle and unaggressive, but also strangely lonely and hollow. To unlearn the habits of the sports fan we must unlearn our erotic investment in the

⁴¹ See Nussbaum, 'Aristotelian Social Democracy' in B. Douglall, G.R. Mara and H.S. Richardson, *Liberalism and the Good* (London: Routledge, 1990), 203–52, pp. 207–8.

world, our attachments to our own team, our own love, our own children, our own life.⁴²

Let me respond to this point in two ways. First, if Nussbaum is right, then she has unearthed what seems to me a strong objection to Stoic cosmopolitanism. If, as I have argued in the previous section, Stoic cosmopolitanism is based on a view of the human good, and at the same time being cosmopolitan makes one unable to love those close to one, or even the country one lives in, better than we love others—in other words, if it makes one miserable—then the claim that the way to flourish is to become cosmopolitan is, to say the least, implausible.⁴³ In the next section, I examine some possible replies to this objection. Second, it is not clear that what Nussbaum says about Marcus is enough to conclude that cosmopolitanism necessarily leads to loneliness, and to the systematic abandonment of particular affections.

It is undeniable that Marcus Aurelius is not a cheerful, upbeat writer. However, it might be a little hasty to trace his depressive tendencies to his cosmopolitan attitudes. First, Marcus was an emperor, and Roman emperors could not, for all sorts of reasons, be anything but lonely. Secondly, there is another strand to Stoic thought, very much present in the *Meditations*, which would almost certainly lead one to experience loneliness and lack of warm, enthusiastic feelings: fatalism.

⁴² Nussbaum, ‘Compassion and Terror’, op. cit.; see also Nussbaum, ‘Kant and Stoic Cosmopolitanism’, op. cit., 11: ‘In the writings of Marcus, especially, one sometimes feels a boundless loneliness, as if the removal of props of habit and local boundaries had left life bereft of a certain warmth and security. If one begins life as a child who loves and trusts its parents, it is tempting to want to reconstruct citizenship along the same lines, finding in an idealised image of a group or nation a surrogate parent who will do one’s thinking for one. Cosmopolitanism, by contrast, requires a nation of adults, who do not need a childlike dependence upon omnipotent parental figures.’

⁴³ There are some parallels between this objection and the communitarian criticism of Kantian Liberalism, i.e. that it is based on a conception of the self as purely rational and does not recognise the importance of family or community relationships in making moral decisions. MacIntyre’s 1984 paper, ‘Is Patriotism a Virtue?’, reprinted in ed. Ronald Beiner, *Theorizing Citizenship* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), 209–28, is particularly relevant here. But see also Michael Sandel’s *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); and Amy Gutman’s review article, ‘Communitarian Critics of Liberalism’, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 14, (1985), 308–22.

Stoic fatalism is the belief that our lives are pre-determined, without the belief that whoever does the determining is a loving father-figure who has our best interests at heart and will see us through in the end: what results is a 'frosty chill'.⁴⁴ Does this view, however, generate also loneliness? It might do, if one took the view that as one's close friends or relatives may be destined to die soon, or to suffer, it is best not to care too much about them. This seems to be the spirit of some advice Epictetus gives to a traveller who will not go home as he cannot bear to see his sick daughter suffering.⁴⁵

Equally, one might blame the Stoic philosophy of the emotions for Marcus's apparent loneliness – a good Stoic should work on the systematic extirpation of feelings, positive or negative, as they are in fact nothing but false beliefs generated by a false conception of the good.⁴⁶ However central to Stoic philosophy in general, and in particular to what the Stoics have to say about cosmopolitanism, it is nonetheless the case that there is a Stoic argument for cosmopolitanism which is independent of the Stoic theory of the emotions. This is the argument we examined in the previous section. In other words, if exerting too much control on his emotions made Marcus lonely, it does not clearly follow that somebody trying to live up to the Stoic cosmopolitan ideal must also be lonely.

⁴⁴ William James makes this point by comparing Stoic fatalism with Judeo-Christian beliefs :

When Marcus Aurelius reflects on the eternal reason that has ordered things, there is a frosty chill about his words which you rarely find in a Jewish, and never in a Christian piece of religious writing. The universe is 'accepted' by all these writers; but how devoid of passion or exultation the spirit of the Roman Emperor is. Compare his fine sentence 'If gods care not for me or my children, here is a reason for it,' with Job's cry: 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him?' and you immediately see the difference I mean. The *anima mundi*, to whose disposal of his own personal destiny the Stoic consents, is there to be respected and submitted to, but the Christian God is there to be loved and the difference of emotional atmosphere is like that between an arctic climate and the tropics, though the outcome in the way of accepting actual conditions uncomplainingly may seem in abstract terms to be much the same: *The varieties of Religious Experience*, op. cit., 42.

⁴⁵ Epictetus *Discourses* I, 11.

⁴⁶ This is the standard picture of the Stoics' views on the emotions, but it is in fact a controversial view which is being challenged in recent work on Stoic emotions. See for example Tad Brennan, 'The Old Stoic Theory of the Emotions', Terence Irwin, 'Stoic Inhumanity' and Troels Engberg-Pedersen, 'Marcus Aurelius on the Emotions', all in eds Sihvola and Endberg-Pedersen, op. cit.

In fact, despite the cosmopolitan demand for impartiality, fatalism, and their views of the emotions, Stoics seem divided on love for one's family, friends and country. The following snippets provide an impression of the diversity of their views. Whilst Marcus Aurelius holds impartiality to be one of his most important moral tenets,⁴⁷ he also believes that one should love one's children with 'true affection'.⁴⁸ Diogenes reports the Stoics as saying both that 'honouring one's parents, brothers and country' is *kathekonta* and that not to do so is contrary to duty,⁴⁹ and that the wise should have wives in common, so that they treat all children alike. In other words, family values matter as things are; but in an ideal world they would be modified beyond recognition.⁵⁰ This sharing of wives and children is also suggested in a passage from Hierocles, in which he recommends that we should love our aunts as if they were our mothers, etc., until we have equal impartial affection for all.⁵¹ Seneca argues that filial devotion is owed in return for parental favours to offspring, favours that we must struggle to outdo;⁵² it is therefore fitting, according to him, to love one's parents.⁵³ Cicero seems to agree.⁵⁴ On the other hand, if Seneca and Cicero feel that they have to provide arguments as to why it is right to love one's family, then this may well be because there are some difficulties in reconciling at belief with Stoic dogma. In the next section, I consider two possible replies to the objection that Stoic cosmopolitanism is incompatible with the need to love one's family more than strangers.

⁴⁷ *Meditations* I, 5.

⁴⁸ *Meditations* I, 13.

⁴⁹ Diogenes Laertius, VII 108–109.

⁵⁰ VII 131.

⁵¹ Long and Sedley 56G.

⁵² The Stoics seem to diverge as to whether what is relevant is that we should feel affection for certain people, or that we should recognise the special status some people have and honour them accordingly. Diogenes and Seneca tend to favour honouring, while Marcus and Hierocles, with whom I am mostly concerned in this section and the following, take seriously the idea that we have a duty to feel affection for others, and not merely to respect them.

⁵³ *On Favours* III, 35, 36.

⁵⁴ *On Duties* III, 112.

PRESERVING LOVE: TWO RESPONSES TO THE OBJECTION

In this section I look at two answers to the objection discussed in the previous section; one which works, and one which does not. I start by describing Martha Nussbaum's solution, and argue that it is not a good one. Nussbaum suggests that the Stoics do in fact attempt to resolve the apparent conflict between cosmopolitan impartiality and local affiliations by claiming that we are in the middle of concentric circles, each circle encompassing a group of citizens whom we originally perceive as more distant from us. The good Stoic will aim to draw people who are in more distant circles into closer ones until everybody is in the inner circle.⁵⁵ The image of the concentric circle comes from a fragment by Hierocles.⁵⁶ However, it is not clear that the passage can be used to argue for the conclusion that it is possible to be cosmopolitan and love one's family, friends and country. It gives specific instructions on how to carry out the process of *oikeiosis*,⁵⁷ central to the Stoic conception of moral development. *Oikeiosis* is the extension of natural tendencies to self-preservation to an impartial concern for all.⁵⁸ This is the right way to develop for a being who is both concerned to protect its own interests and rational; for such a being will see that, rationally, their interests cannot be more important than anybody else's. On this picture, love of one's family is natural, and one stage of *oikeiosis* that human beings must go through: but it is not the last stage. To care excessively for one's family, or to care for them at the expense of concern for outsiders, is for the Stoics a mark of immaturity.⁵⁹

In order to extend our concern beyond ourselves and those close to us, Hierocles says, we must try to draw the people in the outer circles in to the inner ones; and this can be achieved by changing the names we give them. So for instance, we should call our aunt 'mother' and

⁵⁵ See Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity*, op. cit., 60.

⁵⁶ Long and Sedley, 56G.

⁵⁷ For a discussion of the concept of *oikeiosis* and its uses in Stoic philosophy, see Gisela Striker, 'The Role of Oikeiosis in Stoic Ethics', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, I (1983), 145–167; Christopher Gill, 'Did Galen Understand Platonic and Stoic Thinking on Emotions?', in eds Julia Sihvola and Troes Engberg-Perdersen, op. cit., 113–48; Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

⁵⁸ See Annas, op. cit., 265.

⁵⁹ See L. Hill, op. cit., 67. But see also Diogenes' puzzling comment that family love is natural only for the virtuous (VII, 120).

our cousin ‘brother’. As Annas points out, the objections Aristotle brought against Plato’s communal living proposal in the *Republic* apply here as well:

If you try to spread family feeling more widely, you don’t produce a larger family, you just water down the sentiment. Calling your aunt ‘mother’ will then just devalue what to attach to calling someone your mother. However, even if it worked, this might help Plato but not the Stoics. For we would still have a version of family feeling. Thinking of my aunts as my mothers brings them closer to me; it does not tend to make me impartial where considering their interest is at stake – rather the opposite.⁶⁰

Annas offers a twofold criticism of this model. On one scenario the concentric circles model will not work, as it is not possible to ‘spread’ the affection one feels for one’s family without its getting thinner. This is reminiscent of Nussbaum’s point referred to in the previous section, that in order to care for all, one must disinvest oneself of one’s real affections. Alternatively, the model does work: but then, instead of producing impartiality, it implies that as one reduces the distance between the outer and inner circles, so one becomes partial in relation to a larger number of people, rather than impartial. Those who have not yet made it to the inner circles are thus faced with my partiality about a growing number of people.

The latter point may seem inoffensive: isn’t it better to be partial about a large number of people – with the hope that one will eventually be partial about all—than to be partial only towards one’s family? In order to see why it is not inoffensive, consider the following. You are applying for a job in country X. You know that the citizens of X are striving to become cosmopolitan and that they have followed Hierocles’ advice. They have managed to create personal links with citizens from many countries, but not yours. So when it comes to the selection process we know that most people will be preferred to you just because they belong to the appointers’ inner circles – you don’t stand a chance.

So to increase the number of people one counts as family is not a step towards impartiality; quite the contrary. But how about the suggestion that instead of reproducing our affection for those close to us and giving it to strangers, we should, after all, ‘water down’ our feelings and redistribute them equally? Is it as offensive as Aristotle and Annas seem to think? Is it not better in many ways to feel a true but non-violent affection for everyone than to have strong feelings for

⁶⁰ Annas, *op. cit.*, 268.

a few and none for the rest? Compare for instance the parents of a much-wanted single child with those of a large brood. The intensity of the love, the violence of the feelings, the constancy of their expression may be different: but in both cases the love is genuine. Indeed, when Marcus enjoins us to love our children with true affection⁶¹ he must believe that distributing our love to humankind does not leave us with something unworthy of that name. Loving more people is not necessarily incompatible with loving them well.

We might thus want to concede this point to Hierocles, namely that it is possible to love more people with a genuine affection in a less intense and maybe a more relaxed and reasonable manner. However, we cannot concede that spreading our love in the way he describes, attempting to love those who are far in the way we love those who are close, is not a way of developing impartiality whilst preserving some aspects of partiality. It is just a way of becoming partial towards more people. Hierocles cannot entirely succeed, then, in providing us with an answer to the original worry: namely, does Stoic cosmopolitanism allow us to prefer our own in any way, or does it condemn us to impartiality in every aspect of our lives, and hence to unbearable loneliness?

I propose we look at a different argument which aims to reconcile cosmopolitanism with personal affections, one which comes from the originator of the objection that cosmopolitanism leads to loneliness: Marcus Aurelius. I draw the argument from two sections of the *Meditations* in particular, although no doubt it could be supported by other passages. The first passage is this:

How hast thou behaved hitherto to the gods, thy parents, brethren, children, teachers, to those who looked after thy infancy, to thy friends, kinsfolk, to thy slaves? Consider if thou hast hitherto behaved to all in such a way that this may be said of thee: Never has he wronged a man in deed or word.⁶²

In this passage, Marcus is linking the universal requirement that one should harm no one to the particular relationships we have. If it is true that we should harm no one, then it is true that we should not harm our parents, friends or city. But from an impartial perspective, is this question relevant? Should we not ask instead whether we have harmed people we don't know, or don't care for? That a person is treating their family well is hardly a test of their impartiality and

⁶¹ *Meditations* I, 13.

⁶² *Meditations* V, 31.

general goodwill towards humankind. After all, if we treat our family well, it is unlikely to be from a universal duty to respect all human beings: more probably it will be the result of filial affection. So what does Marcus mean in this passage?

One possible reading of the passage is this. We should never treat others badly. We have close relationships with family, friends and some others, which we cannot sever without treating them badly (or, these people have done us favours which we have to return in order not to treat them badly, as Seneca might say). Therefore we should take special care not to treat family and friends badly. Human society is such, the argument goes, that we are more likely to hurt those we are close to just because we have special, demanding, relationships with them. As these relationships are crucial to the good functioning of society, it is important to preserve them. This idea is, I believe, expressed in this second passage from the *Meditations*:

Adapt thyself to the things with which thy lot has been cast: and the men among whom thou hast received thy portion, love them, but do it truly, sincerely.⁶³

This same argument is present in Plutarch, *On Exile*, when he draws a distinction between abandoning one's country voluntarily and doing it out of necessity:

Indeed, if you consider reality outside of all false opinion, a man who has but one city is to the others nothing but a guest and a foreigner. Of course, it is neither right nor honest to abandon one's own city in order to go and inhabit another.' Tis Sparta that has fallen to your lot: honour it, be it a gloriless, sick city, troubled by political ills and intestinal struggles. But when fortune has torn a man away from his city, she permits him to adopt whichever one he pleases.⁶⁴

The same argument for impartiality that leads the Stoics to prefer cosmopolitanism to patriotism does, nonetheless, push for a certain kind of patriotism. Given that some people depend on our allegiance more than others, and would be hurt if we were to withdraw it, we have reason to offer those people some allegiance—although not so much that we shall hurt other people, or be deaf to their claims on our help. So when there are people whose proximity means that they will make claims on us, then it is right that we should pay attention to them.

The claim that children are better off being cared for by those who are close to them – members of their family, teachers, neighbours and

⁶³ *Meditations* VI, 39; see also Cicero, *On Duties*, I, 50.

⁶⁴ Plutarch, *On Exile* 8.602b.

friends – need not be based on considerations of expediency. If it were, it would be open to the objection that it is in fact more expedient, and does more good overall, to devote one's resources to feeding and educating children in developing countries than it is to see to the education and upbringing of one's own child. Rather, the Stoics' view is that the right development of a human being depends on their having personal affiliations. The Stoic concept of *oikeiosis*,⁶⁵ which could be translated as 'making one's home in the universe', implies that human development is based on the gradual appropriation of what is properly human. The child begins by recognising her body as hers, then her family members and her community; and, eventually, she comes to realise her full membership of the human community – she becomes a *cosmopolites*. So in order for human beings to become cosmopolitan, they must go through the various stages of *oikeiosis*, and there have to be structures of affiliation for this to be possible: family, friends, community. This can easily be translated into more neutral terms. Moral development, we might say, depends on the child's being able to form deep attachments, and to feel that she is a valued part of a family or small community; and this is fairly uncontroversial, I think.⁶⁶

Although the Stoics believe that we have a moral duty to care for those who are close to us, they do not, on the whole, say that it is necessary that there should be cities: patriotism, then, is not indispensable. If the Stoic cosmopolitan ideal were to be fulfilled to its limit, then we would not have cities to be loyal to. There would still be geographical, cultural or other loyalties that go beyond family loyalties, but these would not be threatening to the common good in the way that full-blown patriotism sometimes is. For example, a Stoic cosmopolitan will not be so engrossed in global matters that she will not care that the forest area in her town is under threat. She will feel that she owes her town that much loyalty, that it has fallen to her lot, and that she must, because she is ideally placed for that purpose, help look after it.

⁶⁵ See footnote 54.

⁶⁶ This is in no way an argument for a particular kind of family structure. Even a Kibbutz model of the upbringing of children would satisfy the requirements I have laid out: all that is needed is that children should be brought up in an environment that they can claim as theirs, by people they can form deep attachments to, but who need not actually be related to them.

It would be wrong to conclude that the Stoics simply recommended that we all love our parents, children, lovers, friends and our countries as we are naturally bound to, and that the rest will take care of itself. While they did believe that human fellowship depended on there being such close relationships, these relationships are not by any means the ones we are naturally bound to have. Examples of such unnatural feelings abound in Seneca's writings on family love, in particular in *On Anger* 12,1 and 2. We should be moved to fight to save or avenge our parents, not by feeling, he says, but by duty. It is inappropriate, according to him, to feel anger at the sight of one's mother being raped; or to feel faint when one's father is being operated on (presumably without being put to sleep first); or again, to be pained when he is killed. Marcus may claim that we should love our family and friends truly, but he does not specify what that means. No doubt Seneca holds true love to be based on reason rather than in the emotions, and as a Stoic, Marcus may well share this belief.

The Stoic theory of moral development does not allow real, emotional relationships with the people we are close to, so it may well lead to loneliness. On the other hand, it does not seem that the argument for cosmopolitanism I have presented here depends greatly on the principle of *oikeiosis*, or the idea that it is somehow immature to be emotionally involved. The argument merely points out that we have no reason, emotional or otherwise, to give our allegiance to any particular country, but to give it instead to the world as a whole. We do not need to embrace any other Stoic view in order to support it.

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