

virtue and what 'participates' in virtue; conversely for bad and vice.²⁰ Everything else is 'indifferent', though here again a distinction is drawn between things which play a positive role in a normal, healthy life (preferred indifferents) and those which play a negative role (dispreferred indifferents).²¹ Health is a typical preferred and illness a typical dispreferred. There are also 'absolute indifferents' which play no role at all—such as whether the number of hairs on one's head is odd or even. This doctrine is the key to understanding the latitude for choice which Stoicism leaves to the rational agent. A startling range of things, indeed virtually everything that human beings normally think about when making morally significant choices, falls into this category. Yet the 'good', virtue and what participates in virtue, is the real determinant of moral success. Preferred things, such as health and wealth, may be natural to us as humans; but they cannot be guaranteed to be the appropriate things to pursue in all circumstances; the recommendation implicit in labelling them 'preferred' can operate only at the level of general types, since in some concrete cases they might in fact be disadvantageous. In contrast, virtue is always and in every case beneficial—just as one might expect on the basis of Socratic theory.²²

Moral injunctions and recommendations, 'laws' and rules, all typically deal with actions rather than things, and the Stoic classification of morally pertinent actions is closely parallel to their classification of the objects of choice. Appropriate actions

doxography (*Ecl.* ii.57.18–58.4); the tripartition underlies parts of the organization of Cicero's and Diogenes Laertius' presentations of Stoic ethics.

²⁰ DL 7.94; *Ecl.* ii.57.20–58.4.

²¹ See DL 7.102–7 and my discussion in 'Stoic Ethics I', *CHHP*. H. W. Ausland ('On the Moral Origin of the Pyrrhonian Philosophy', *Elenchos*, 10 (1989), 380 ff.) refers to a Stoic view which sorted indifferent things 'in accordance with several degrees of indifference'. The 'several' is puzzling; I do not see much in Stoic sources which makes it natural to speak of 'degrees' of indifference—except, that is, for the contrast between utterly insignificant things and the preferred/dispreferred. His discussion of the orthodox Stoic classification of indifferents at 398–400 seems to me to strain at fine distinctions in order to enhance its parallelism with Pyrrhonian 'theory'.

²² See the debate between Ariston of Chios and more conventional Stoics as represented in Sextus *M* 11.64–7; cf. my discussion in 'Stoic Ethics I', *CHHP*.

correspond roughly to preferred indifferents and morally correct actions correspond to the good. The former can only be specified in a general way, at the level of types, and the generalizations can be no more than approximate. Hence the most enlightening definition of appropriate action is as 'that which, when done, admits of a reasonable defence';²³ what is required is not a probative or certain justification, nor a justification in terms of moral rightness or virtue. The standard of judgement here is quasi-forensic, as suggested by the use of the technical term *apologia*. By contrast, morally right actions are defined in terms of their relationship to rightness or virtue²⁴ and so are either concrete tokens (i.e. all pertinent acts performed by a sage) or universal but vacuous generalizations (such as 'prudent walking').²⁵

Against the background of such a classification of actions and objects of action, rules and recommendations can be tricky. Types of actions are described as appropriate or non-appropriate; but there is always a further judgement to be made on the level of tokens: each individual action is itself either correct or wrong (*katorthōma*, *hamartēma*). There can be no universal and substantive rules about choosing or acting—appropriate actions are subject to 'special circumstances',²⁶ which in the extreme case might even justify cannibalism,²⁷ and preferred

²³ DL 7.107.

²⁴ See *Ecl.* ii.96.20–2. They are also defined in relation to appropriate actions (they are 'perfect' appropriate actions (*Ecl.* ii. 85.9–20, 2.93.14–16)).

²⁵ See Annas, *The Morality of Happiness*, 97–8. The connection between preferred indifferents and appropriate actions is very close; generally speaking, an appropriate action is one aimed at gaining a preferred indifferent, just as a morally right action is one aimed at a genuine good as such.

²⁶ See White, 'Two Notes on Stoic Terminology', *American Journal of Philology*, 99 (1978), 111–19. Acts which are appropriate only in special circumstances must be what Philo has in mind at *SVF* iii.513: *to mē kathēkon estin hote dratai kathēkontōs*.

²⁷ At DL 7.121 eating human flesh is mentioned as something that the sage will do in special circumstances. DL 7.121 also reports the common view that the sage will participate in political life unless there is some relevant obstacle. For cannibalism and incest (in particular Chrysippus' treatment of Oedipus and Jocasta), see Vander Waerdt 'Zeno's *Republic*', 300–1 and nn. 102–4. What makes DL 7.121 so important for present purposes is the connection it makes between taboo-breaking and the freedom of the wise man. On DL 7.121 and 7.125 (and on other comparable evidence) see n. 18 above.