The logical basis of Stoic ethics

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Nature and its implications

- Moore views Stoic ethics to be metaphysical

- Long claims that Stoics denied metaphysical principles
Nature and its implications

Long sees 2 reasons why Moore misinterprets Stoic ethics

1) Chrysippus: ‘There is no possible or more suitable way to approach the subject of good and bad things, the virtues and happiness than from universal Nature and the management of the universe’
   - “He [Moore] might have argued that Nature itself cannot be an object of sense perception, therefore propositions which have Nature as their subject must be propositions about a ‘supersensible’ entity.” (137)

2) Based off distinctions in meanings of ‘natural’ and ‘normal’
   - ‘the normal must be good’
     - Long says “The normal condition of human beings is not consonant with Nature” (138)
       - Natures of different degree i.e the good and preferred
Nature and its Implications

Deductive method and consistency

- Infer two properties of Nature
  - Nature as provident and right reasoning
    - “only acts which are consistent with Nature are right”
  - Nature as destiny
    - “establishing conditions which are necessary and sufficient for the will to perform good actions, and conditions which are necessary but not sufficient for the will to perform bad actions”
Human nature, Reason, Virtue, Good, Happiness

Long suggests that the Stoics aspire to demonstrate the “summum bonum” by inferring the property of Nature

- “By nature is meant a supreme providential power whose right reasoning is manifested by events and the structure of the world”
- Chrysippus suggests that one should live in accordance to both Nature and ‘human nature’
- ‘human nature’ refers not to the default condition of mankind but to living in accordance with nature
Human nature, Reason, Virtue, Good, Happiness

Human Nature distinct from and non-human animals

- human animals have a rational soul/mind
  - Pneuma for humans “constitutes itself as reason” (142)
    - Driven by similar externals of non-human animals, but our rationality takes precedence following the Gods.
- Non-human animals living as sentient beings
  - Driven by appetition or aversion
Human nature, Reason, Virtue, Good, Happiness

Zeno and Chrysippus define virtue as: ‘a disposition and faculty of the governing principle of the soul brought into being by reason’ (144)

- “Virtue is to be pursued not from any specifically moral motive but in order to advance the interests of oneself and others”
- Long proposes 2 ways that the Stoics virtue can be interpreted
  - Long feels as if the second of these is more representative of Stoicism
    - Virtue is something to be chosen for its own sake and because it is advantageous
      - i.e. valuable in itself
Human nature, Reason, Virtue, Good, Happiness

What is good?
- Good is what accords with nature as well as human nature (physis)
  - Good is defined as ‘advantage’ (profit, interest)
    - What Long finds Stoic advantage to mean is “beneficial to the agent and all those affected by his actions”

Happiness is different from a modern definition
- Happiness is the long term goal of living by the definition of good
Premise: human beings should live in accordance with Nature;

“That which accords with Nature is right.

Nature directs all animals (and children) by self-protective impulse...

Nature directs all human beings to live by sound reason (self-protective impulse shaped by reason). Therefore, it is advantageous and right (accords with Nature) for all human beings to live by sound reason,” (Long 145-146).

Ethical statements must take their origin from statements about Nature (147).
“Since reason by way of a more perfect management has been bestowed on rational beings, to live correctly in accordance with reason comes to be accordant with nature for them; for reason supervenes as the craftsman of impulse,” (Long 147).

Living in accordance with reason is grounded in accordance with human nature, human nature is grounded in accordance with Nature.

*Therefore* living according to reason is Natural.
From Impulse to Virtue: 
The Human Goal

Offering a structured explanation to the theory of Diogenes Leartius

- Nature creates all living things and provides them with the means of securing what is advantageous to them. (T) “Nature endowed animals with self protection as their impulse.”

- That which accords with Nature is right. (S)
  - Nature directs all animals (and children) by a self-protective impulse.
  
  - “Since reason by way of a more perfect management has been bestowed on rational beings, to live correctly in accordance with reason comes to be accordant with nature for them for reason supervenes as the craftsman of impulse.”
  
  - Human impulse is ‘shaped by reason’
From Impulse to Virtue:  
The Human Goal

- Given (T) and (S) it follows that, it is advantageous and right for all animals (and children) to be directed by their self-protective impulse.

- Nature directs all human beings to live by sound reason
  - They are given self-protective impulse shaped by reason. (R)

- (R) Therefore, it is advantageous and right – Therefore, accords with Nature – for all human beings to live by sound reason.

- ‘to live by sound reason is logically equivalent to living in accord with human nature’

- Nature’s rationality is such that to living in accord with mature entails for rational beings living by sound reason, being deliberately obedient to Nature’s will, being a part of nature.
From Impulse to Virtue: The Human Goal

- With the premises (R) the argument moves from what is advantageous and right for animals as well as children to what is advantageous and right for human beings.
  - For humans to live in accordance with nature they must live through sound reason.
  - Therefore, it is advantageous and right for all human beings to live in accord with human nature and according to virtue.

- Human nature – represented as QI – is part of Nature.
  - Therefore, it is advantageous and right for all human beings to live in accord with human nature and Nature.
From Impulse to Virtue: The Human Goal

- To live in accord with Nature entails deliberate obedience to Nature's will which-living by sound reason. (P)
  ◦ “our own natures are parts of the Nature of the universe”

- Therefore, it is advantageous and right for all human beings deliberately to obey Nature's will. (Q2)

- ‘Therefore, obedience to one’s own reason, if this is sound entails obedience to Nature

- ‘Obedience to Nature entails obedience to one’s own reason’

- ‘A human being who acts by sound reason does what is right; subjectively and objectively’
Conclusions: Completing the circle

- In R.D. Hick’s book, “Stoic and Epicurean”, he states that “It is reasonable to live according to nature and that Nature should live according to reason”

- Long questions the Stoics
  ◦ “If stoic moral theory is unintelligible when divorced from Nature, how practical is their system when Nature is placed in its true perspective.”
  ◦ “A human being is to live as Nature will, that is obedient to Nature”

- A.A. Long ends with:
  - “The Stoics have given us no satisfactory answer, as far as I can see.”