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Front Nature to Happiness

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# *From Nature to Happiness*

Julia Annas

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A collection of Gisela Striker's papers is a welcome event.<sup>1</sup> Many of them have deservedly become classics, but they are scattered in a variety of publications, some not easy to get hold of, and until now not all of them have been available in English.<sup>2</sup>

Striker is well-known for writing very carefully considered papers which build on a deep scholarship without intruding it, and are always very lucid; each paper emerges from prolonged consideration of a point, but they do not display the density and over-compression that often marks the works of scholars who choose not to publish copiously.

The present collection contains one new paper, the first, 'Methods of sophistry', about the methodology of the Sophists and their relation to later philosophy. Two papers are newly translated from German — 'Kriterion tes aletheias' and 'On the difference between the Pyrrhonists and the Academics'. The remaining twelve are reprinted in English from various sources, and gathered into two groups, on epistemology and on ethics. This collection, it should be noted, does not exhaust the scope of Striker's work; apart from early work on Plato's *Philebus* she has done

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- 1 A review of Gisela Striker, *Essays on Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996. ISBN: 0 521 47051 X (hardback), 0 521 47641 0 (paperback).
  - 2 Classical scholars and philosophers should, of course, read German. But it is only realistic to admit that many graduate students, at least, will not acquire a reading knowledge of German until a point well beyond the start of their careers, and it is useful to have these papers accessible to graduates.

work on ancient logic, particularly Aristotle's.<sup>3</sup> However, the present collection forms two clusters of papers which hang together well and form a satisfying introduction to two areas of enormous interest in ancient philosophy.<sup>4</sup>

In the Preface Striker points out that, while in writing the essays she has been concerned to learn about and from the intellectual contexts of the thinkers she studies, nonetheless they 'are written from a philosopher's perspective, not just in the sense that they focus on philosophical arguments and theories, but also in the sense that they go beyond a description or recording of philosophical theses in attempting to find the most philosophically plausible or coherent way of fitting them together, and in discussing the philosophical merits and weaknesses of the Hellenistic theories. So they are also discussions of questions in epistemology and ethics' (x). Striker gives a spirited defence of the idea that historians of philosophy are contributing to philosophy in a way no different from that of any philosopher in a specialized area. The ancients can aid us in the discussion of philosophical problems, since philosophy progresses not cumulatively but by a continuous process of recognizing errors, working out alternatives and refining concepts.

The sharp separation of history of philosophy from 'systematic' (or, in invidious comparison, 'real') philosophy has been widely under attack for some time now, and probably the best way to further its demise is to emulate Striker's work in producing papers which are widely readable and which do contribute to philosophical discussion by way of contributing to the history of philosophy. This, rather than methodological ruminations, is surely the route to real progress, in both philosophy and in history of philosophy.

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3 See her *Peras und Apeiron: Das Problem der Formen in Platons Philebos, Hypomnemata* Heft 30, Göttingen 1970. Striker has been working on a commentary on Aristotle's *Prior Analytics*. See also her 'Perfection and Reduction in Aristotle's *Prior Analytics*' in M. Frede and G. Striker, eds., *Rationality in Greek Thought*, Oxford 1996, 203-20, and 'Modal vs. Assertoric Syllogistic', in R. Bolton and R. Smith, eds., *Logic, Science and Dialectic in Aristotle, Ancient Philosophy XIV* (1994), Special Issue, 39-52.

4 In the Preface (x) Striker produces the *caveat* that in the present over-specialized climate it is not likely that a specialized book will acquire an extensive non-specialized audience. However, it should be stressed that Striker's papers are, because of their clarity and her skill in appealing to evidence without overwhelming the reader, a particularly good introduction to the topics they cover.

The epistemology papers not only are contributions to our understanding of ancient theories of knowledge (the obvious understanding of 'epistemology'), they also display some interpretative advantages to focussing on argument and its practice, rather than simply on its conclusions. In 'Methods of Sophistry', for example, Striker looks at prominent Sophists in terms of their practice of types of argument, rather than their supposed theories. The result makes a great deal more sense of their philosophical legacy and the various ways it was interpreted than does emphasis on positive doctrines — an emphasis which makes Protagoras into a strangely vague negative dogmatist, and Gorgias notoriously baffling.

In this review, however, I shall be focussing on the book's second part. There are eight papers on ethics — one on Epicurean hedonism, two more general ones ('Greek ethics and moral theory' and 'Happiness as tranquility', both originally Tanner lectures) and five on the Stoics, four on particular topics and one longer one ('Following nature') on Stoic ethical theory as a whole, originally given as six Nellie Wallace lectures. I shall concentrate on the discussions of ancient moral theory, and of the Stoic theory, since these are the occasions, I think, for Striker's most controversial and interesting claims.

It is a commonplace of modern discussion, both in history of ethics and in 'systematic' ethical theory, that ancient moral theories are sufficiently divergent from modern ones that it is reasonable to consider them as forming a different, possibly an alternative tradition. Striker, in 'Greek ethics and moral theory', points out the obvious aspects of ancient theories that have been felt to be lacking in modern approaches (at least until recently). The ancients are concerned with *eudaimonia*, happiness or the good life, not merely right action; thus they treat motives for action as a serious matter of concern; and they are interested in moral character and the virtues. These differences, however, do not seem to Striker to have as radical an import as has been sometimes thought. '[M]odern ethics is after all a descendant of the same tradition, however complicated the historical development' (170). Hence she focusses on finding connexions where we might at first seem to find a notable difference. 'For a modern reader', she claims, for example, 'the classical Greek treatments of ethics are surprisingly reticent about what we have learned to consider as the most fundamental question — the justification of moral decisions or the foundation of moral rules' (170; shortly this becomes 'questions about the foundations of morality'). She then looks for reasons for this absence in some theories, and discusses the adequacy of its treatment when it does emerge. Her methodological assumption is thus

to discuss and criticize the ancient theories as participants in our own tradition of moral philosophy, rather than to examine the idea that the ancient theories might make assumptions or moves that are different from ours, or the idea that we might find fundamental concepts to be divergent.

It is not to be expected that modern philosophers would agree on what are important or defining features of moral theory, but it is a little surprising that Striker is so confident that we should be looking at ancient theories for questions about moral rules, or questions of the foundations of morality. Concern with moral rules is not prominent until the Stoics, and even there is somewhat different from the kind of concern with rules that can be found in modern theories that can be called deontological.<sup>5</sup> It could be countered that rules are a prominent part of morality in the everyday understanding of that; but what is being discussed is moral *theory*, and it is a pity that more initial attention is not paid to the question of what this is, in modern philosophy, since few issues have been more disputed in the last quarter-century.

This is even more of a concern for the claim that central to moral theory is the question of the *foundation* of morality, or moral rules. For there is extensive disagreement as to what a 'foundation' for morality could be, or whether morality is, in fact, the kind of thing to need foundations. Thus, Striker's point of perspective on the ancient theories (she considers Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus and the Stoics) is quite problematic. When she presses the ancient theories for answers to the question, 'What is the foundation of morality?' many readers may not find this a clearly understandable demand, and hence may be unclear as to what it is that is being sought.

What would it be, for morality to need a foundation? Striker calls this the central question of modern moral theory, but there are a number of questions that cluster in this area. The worry could be that morality is not objective, in some way not real; perhaps this worry is motivated by the thought that morality could be the product of human convention. Striker seems inclined to understand the question this way, since she

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5 See P. Mitsis, 'Seneca on reason, rules and moral development' in J. Brunschwig and M. Nussbaum, eds., *Passions & Perceptions*, Cambridge 1993, and for a full discussion of the issue with respect to deontology, see Brad Inwood, 'Rules and Reasoning in Stoic Ethics' (forthcoming in K. Ierodiakonou, ed., *Topics in Stoic Philosophy*, Oxford University Press).

traces it to the fifth-century sophists' debates about convention and nature. Moreover, this debate sets the agenda for her, since she discusses Plato's and Epicurus' purportedly unsatisfactory attempts to find a 'foundation for morality' entirely in terms derived from the sophistic debate, that is, whether justice merely derives from social convention or has some other basis. (This results in a contentious focus, since both Plato and Epicurus have much to say about morality in contexts that have nothing to do with social justice.)

However, the search for morality's foundation need not concern questions of objectivity; the worry might rather be that there might be nothing, or perhaps nothing adequate, to justify the claims that morality makes on us. However objective morality might be, it still might lack an answer to what Korsgaard has called 'the normative question'.<sup>6</sup> In fact, the problem Striker finds with Aristotle — his alleged complacent assumption that there will be convergence between people of practical wisdom and their answers to moral questions — looks more like a failure to produce a convincing justification than a failure to back *phusis* rather than *nomos*.

Striker never distinguishes these ways of being a foundation for morality, and this raises a feature of her methodology. She assumes that we are sufficiently within the same tradition as the ancient moral theories that we can discuss the ancient theories without also examining the presuppositions of our own. Thus, she takes it that we can assume that the ancients were working towards a statement of the question about the foundations of morality, even if we ourselves do not have a satisfactory answer of our own to this question, because it is a question that arises for the tradition that we all share.

This aspect of her approach makes her discussions of ancient theories clear, but at the same time somewhat elusive. It is easy to sympathize with Striker's direct approach to philosophical engagement with the ancients, one which engages the reader in shared enquiry rather than setting out the position she is committed to and then asking how the ancient views are related to it. But in a very disputed field such as moral

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6 See C. Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity*, Cambridge 1996, ch. 1, 'The normative question'. Korsgaard's own understanding of the question and its scope is rather narrow, since she focusses on obligations and demands. There is no good reason, however, why the issue should not arise about goals, ways of life or the demands of virtue.

theory Striker's approach carries a risk; the reader may not share her understanding of the implicit shared tradition, and this threatens the presupposition of shared enquiry.

The nearest that Striker gets to laying an interpretative position on the table is at the end of 'Following Nature', where she comments that the Stoics were no doubt right to evaluate people according to moral standards and in a way that disregards consequences, 'but this is not because moral virtue is the only true good, but presumably because virtuous conduct contributes or tends to contribute to the well-being of all members of society, and we evaluate people as good or bad *qua* members of society' (278). This would explain why she sees the 'foundation of morality' so persistently in terms of the justice of social institutions, but it is not very revealing about a theory of morality. I do not, for example, evaluate my children, spouse or friends *qua* members of society, and it would be odd if this were the only evaluative perspective I had on myself. We also find raised rather urgently the question, why we are to care about society as the reference-point for evaluating individuals, and what it is that we are to value in society.

Moreover, we might wonder if this kind of evaluative perspective is one that will do justice to ancient moral theories, which are eudaimonist — theories of the agent's happiness. It is not clear from this brief comment whether Striker favours a utilitarian type of theory or something weaker, but the thought that virtue is evaluated from the viewpoint of the well-being of all members of society is one which is notoriously difficult to reach from eudaimonist assumptions as Striker understands them. (On p. 182 she makes brief remarks to the effect that, since humans are eminently social animals, there are good prospects for a theory which gives us good reason to plan our lives — apparently on eudaimonist assumptions — 'within an acceptable social order' established by rules. This is an interesting and promising idea, but not followed up in sufficient detail for the reader to assess it in depth.)

All this can make it frustrating for the reader that Striker is so unforthcoming most of the time about her own assumptions about moral theory, especially since she criticizes the ancient theories quite severely. According to her, the Stoics do better than Plato, Aristotle and the Epicureans in that they do look for a foundation for morality, but they pick one which lands them with a devastating split in their theory ('Moral Theory'). They misdescribe virtue and misdescribe happiness (280, the end of 'Following Nature'). It would be a reasonable reaction to wonder if perhaps the Stoics could be seen as moderately successful at a different

task, rather than as being unsuccessful at the task they are taken to be sharing with us moderns.

Striker's extended discussion of Stoic theory, entitled 'Following nature', foregrounds the role of nature in Stoic theory; Stoic ethics, she claims, is an investigation of living in agreement with nature, as Aristotle's ethics is an investigation of virtue (223). We have Stoic texts that tell us that living in agreement with nature is the same thing as living in agreement with virtue,<sup>7</sup> and this might give one pause before hypothesizing that nature is a 'foundation' for ethics in a way that virtue is not.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, of our major sources for Stoic ethics Cicero, the only one whose presentation survives whole in its original form,<sup>9</sup> gives Stoic ethics a completely different structure, emphasizing virtue and its special kind of value. Striker meets this problem (as many scholars do not)<sup>10</sup>

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7 Diogenes Laertius VII 87, Arius Didymus ap. Stobaeus, *Eclogae* II 77.16-19, Cicero, *de Officiis* III 13.

8 Striker points out (at the beginning of 'Antipater, or the art of living') that the Stoics go in for striking identity-statements, and that this raises problems as to the form of the theses and the arguments supporting them. However, the fact that they prominently claimed that living according to virtue was the same thing as living according to nature is an indication that what the Stoics had in mind was not a non-circular claim of one-way justification. The frequent Stoic use of identity-statements about virtue, nature, God, fate, etc. is one indication of their holism: you reach the same result from different paths, and thereby get different understandings of it.

9 Cicero's work *de Finibus* survives complete, and contains, in Book III, his attempt to present Stoic ethics to an intelligent audience. Cicero was philosophically educated, and we have reason to respect his view of how Stoic ethics would be presented to such an audience by a Stoic. With Diogenes Laertius, and the account of Stoic ethics by Arius Didymus preserved in Stobaeus, we are dealing with doxography, which in the case of Arius has almost certainly been drastically abbreviated. With the latter two texts, although they contain much valuable material, we cannot infer that their order and mode of presentation corresponds to what the original author intended as an exposition of Stoic ethics.

10 A.A. Long, for example, heavily stresses the passage at Diogenes Laertius VII 85-8 in his articles on Stoic ethics, because it contains what he calls the 'theocratic postulate'; see his 'The logical basis of Stoic ethics' and 'Stoic eudaimonism', chapters 6 and 8 in his *Stoic Studies*, Cambridge 1996. In 'Stoic eudaimonism' Long shows himself aware of the extensive material in Cicero, but on 'doctrinal' grounds regards this as misleading and disappointing as an account of the Stoics' views. I cannot here argue fully against the methodology of downgrading our best, fullest and most intelligent ancient witness, Cicero, in favour of a single passage in a late



with an extended argument ('The role of *oikeiōsis* in Stoic ethics') to the effect that Cicero is confused.

Striker holds that it is the nature of the universe that provides the foundation for Stoic ethics, for only so do we get a non-circular definition of the object of knowledge of the good (239 — this claim emerges from her interesting discussion of the debate between Chrysippus and Aristo). Cosmic nature is the source of laws of nature, following which will produce virtue in the agent (section 4 discusses problems internal to this idea). However, Carneades, arguing in the Academic Sceptic tradition of producing difficulties within the opponent's own theory, shows that the Stoic appeal to nature as the basis of virtue contains an internal conflict. For the Stoics trace to nature the development of both wisdom and justice. But admitted cases of wisdom turn out to be cases of prudence but hardly of justice; the Stoics assume a coincidence of self- and other-regarding natural impulses, 'without at the same time providing a method for deciding which one is to be given precedence in cases of actual conflict' (256). Thus it is criticism of the Stoics which brings to light the distinction between prudence and morality (181).

All these leading ideas — that we need a foundation for ethics that can be characterized in a 'non-circular' way, that this foundation must provide relatively detailed directives, and that without an explicit decision-procedure<sup>11</sup> we will face a conflict between prudence and morality — are recognizable constituents of modern moral theories. But in the case of all three doubts can be raised as to whether they are appropriate ideas to look for in an ancient moral theory, the Stoic in particular.

Why would we need a 'non-circular' definition of a foundation for ethics? Presumably the worry is that a circular account will be uninformative and trivial. This need not be the case, however — the Stoics in particular have an epistemology which supposes that we can 'articulate' our 'preconceptions' — that is, that the intuitive grasp of the world that we have can be refined and improved, without our being referred to a

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doxography in Diogenes, not generally regarded as our brightest ancient philosophical source.

11 I am not assuming that a decision procedure must be something mechanical, merely that the assumption that one is needed implies that the theory is in some way incomplete without a method that will come to actual decisions in particular cases.

different methodology or different type of object (as in Plato).<sup>12</sup> Our intuitive views are not simple-minded thoughts to be swept away by theoretical reasoning — they are richer in content than we intuitively think. The worry about circularity, though, might be a different one — that, however much we may enrich the content of our thought, we will never get beyond the sphere of the ethical. But, as we have seen, we cannot assume that all theories will accept that there is a need to do this.

A separate worry attends the claim that it is cosmic nature, rather than human nature, that is the ‘foundation’ of Stoic ethics. The problem here is that Stoic methodology does not make room for ethics, one part of philosophy, to owe its foundations to metaphysics, another part of philosophy. Each of the parts (logic, physics, ethics) is developed separately in the appropriate way and with the appropriate methodology; finally all are grasped together in a holistic way. Since the parts of philosophy are mutually interdependent, foundationalist metaphors are arguably not appropriate. But in any case, Stoic metaphysics provides the context for Stoic ethics only in the sense in which it provides the context for Stoic logic; if there were pressure within morality for metaphysical foundations, ethics would not be what it is, a distinct part of philosophy.<sup>13</sup>

Striker, construing Stoic ethics as depending on cosmic nature, follows up the idea that living according to nature means living virtuously. She takes this to imply that there must be some way in which the content of virtue can be extracted from the directives of cosmic nature, or the laws of nature, since the Stoics think of nature as a lawgiver. But then, ‘if they were not just trying to provide an impressive cosmological background to their preaching of more or less standard morality, the

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12 Cf. T. Irwin’s discussion of Epictetus’ ‘articulation of the preconceptions’ in *Plato’s Ethics*, Oxford 1995.

13 This issue has been much discussed recently. See my *The Morality of Happiness* ch. 5; J. Cooper, ‘Eudaimonism and the Appeal to Nature in the Morality of Happiness: Comments on Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness*’ *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* LV (1995) 587-98; my reply follows, 599-610. Cooper returns to the issue in his ‘Eudaimonism, the Appeal to Nature and “Moral Duty” in Stoicism’ in S. Engstrom and J. Whiting, eds., *Aristotle, Kant and the Stoics: Rethinking Happiness and Duty*, Cambridge 1996, 261-84, as does J. Schneewind, ‘Kant and Stoic Ethics’, Engstrom and Whiting, 285-30. See also B. Inwood’s review of *The Morality of Happiness* in *Ancient Philosophy* 15 (1995) 647-65.

Stoics must have offered some way of finding out what nature's laws might be' (249). Optimistically, they assume that nature will direct us to be moral, rather than predatory as Callicles, for example, thought, and their theory of *oikeiōsis* or 'familiarization' is supposed to show how this can come about. It might be, however, that nature gives some content to our 'appropriate actions' by directing us in some ways rather than others, without nature's being what justifies our acting that way. It might be that nature indicates what we should do, while the reason we should do it is to be found in the point that it will conduce to our happiness. That is, nature can lead us to act virtuously without our going outside a eudaimonistic framework. Just this has been powerfully argued by Joachim Lukoschus.<sup>14</sup>

Stoic *oikeiōsis* begins from self-concern, and develops in a way which, in modern terms, begins from prudence and shows how at a certain point we become aware of and attracted to another way of using our reason, the moral way. Striker is impressed by the way we seem to have prudential and moral reasoning in the same theory, and credits Carneades with pointing out that there is a potential conflict here between self-regarding reason, which develops into wisdom, and other-regarding reason, which develops into justice. The Stoics have no decision procedure for such conflicts; so, we are left concluding, their theory needs defence which they do not give it.

Striker's story elevates Carneades' two speeches for and against justice, which we know only through fragments, to the role of a pivotal development in ethical theory. Doubts can be raised as to whether Carneades' relation to the Stoics is what Striker suggests,<sup>15</sup> but in any

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14 Joachim Lukoschus, *Gesetz und Glück: Untersuchungen zum Naturalismus der stoischen Ethik*. Thesis presented to the Catholic University, Nijmegen, 1997. ISBN 90-9010196-9. Lukoschus also argues that Stoic epistemology stands in the way of our having the required grasp of cosmic nature that would be necessary if it were the source of the normativity of ethical demands.

15 The fragments of the speeches that we have, preserved in Lactantius, derived from Cicero's *de Republica* III. However, in context the speeches were said to be directed against Plato and Aristotle, and Carneades appears to have thought that Chrysippus produced nothing worth discussing on the subject of justice. Striker insists nevertheless (179n10) that Carneades was arguing against a Stoic view (identified in eclectic spirit with those of Plato and Aristotle). But Carneades' arguments were *ad hominem*, and in this case he does not argue from Stoic premises, but from common-sense premises which they do not share (see below).

case it seems a little implausible to claim either that so great a blow to Stoic theory was unrecognized as such in the ancient world,<sup>16</sup> or that it took an *ad hominem* argument against the Stoics to make people aware of a theoretical problem about prudence and morality. In any case, if Carneades' argument is aimed at the Stoics, it fails, because it is not *ad hominem*; the Stoics do not accept the common-sensical premises from which Carneades produces the familiar common-sense conflict of prudence and morality.

It is surely more economical as well as charitable in interpretation to take the Stoics to be aware of the distinction, on the everyday level, between prudence and morality, and to be producing a theory which tries to show that moral reasoning is not just different from prudential, but subsumes it and its tasks. To do this requires a full account of the role of the indifferents in Stoic ethics and the way in which they figure in the virtuous person's deliberations, which cannot be offered here.<sup>17</sup> Here I merely wish to point out that there are obvious interpretative alternatives here, ones which do not present the Stoics with a theory suffering from highly obvious problems, and make better sense of the way the Stoic theory was received and discussed in the ancient world.<sup>18</sup>

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16 Our reports of Carneades' speeches do not represent them as aimed at the Stoics, or as scoring a great hit. Cicero, in his philosophical works, shows himself well aware of which arguments against the Stoics, from the Academy or Antiochus, are standard arguments requiring response if the theory is to be regarded as viable; he does not think of Carneades', or anyone's, arguments as having this effect with regard to an issue of prudence and morality.

17 I have discussed this in 'Prudence and Morality in Ancient and Modern Ethics', *Ethics* 105 (1995) 241-57, and also in 'Aristotle and Kant on Practical Reasoning' in S. Engstrom and J. Whiting, eds., *Aristotle, Kant and the Stoics: Rethinking Happiness and Duty*, Cambridge 1996, 237-58.

18 Apart from the point that ancient writers do not give Carneades the role that Striker does, the issue of prudence versus morality, familiar to us since Butler made the issue clear, and most forcibly set out in Sidgwick, is not on the ancient agenda of contentious topics. Thrasymachus in the *Republic* notoriously raises it at the common-sense level, but it is not just Plato but all ancient theories that produce theoretical answers part of which is constituted by the claim that prudence and morality do not, when properly considered, have equal rational claims. This is the source of the idea that the person who flouts morality for what she sees as her own advantage is misconceiving her advantage. She is failing in rationality, not following through a rational view of prudence which happens to conflict with morality.

Striker's treatment of the Stoic theory as containing an unresolved conflict between prudence and morality also brings out another feature of her approach: her rather minimalist understanding of eudaimonism (despite her sympathy for the idea [181-2]). She introduces it (170 ff.) as the view that happiness is the final end of all our actions, where this presupposes: that there is a general answer to the question of what the good life is, that we all desire to live a good life and that 'we do or should plan all our actions in such a way that they lead or contribute to the good life' (171). The hedging in the last clause reflects her belief that there is something dubious about claiming, as most Greek theories do, that we all do pursue happiness, 'so that we will be unhappy or disappointed with our lives if we have a wrong conception of the good' (172). It is not made clear what is wrong with this claim, basic to ancient theories, which follow Aristotle in thinking it trivially true that we all seek happiness, so that disagreement sets in only at the level of the right specification of happiness. Perhaps Striker thinks that philosophers have no business telling other people when they are or are not happy, but this would fit ill with her acceptance of an objective specification of happiness, at least at a general level (171).

Striker thinks that Aristotle is unclear as to whether he holds the dubious claim or the more cautious one that rational agents should organize their lives round a justified conception of their final end. If we find the bolder claim 'difficult to accept', Striker claims, 'we may still study the Greek theories on the basis of the more limited interpretation suggested by Aristotle' (172).

It is remarkable that in this discussion of bold-but-dubious versus cautious eudaimonism no role is played by the formal conditions on *eudaimonia*, which play such a large role in Aristotle's discussion, and which ever since Plato's *Philebus* had served to rule out some candidates from being happiness. The formal conditions, of completeness and self-sufficiency, are not advice as to how to live your life rationally (and indeed Aristotle puts no stress on this) but guides to help you find a suitable specification for what you are seeking anyway. The formal conditions are important in the structure of ancient eudaimonism, and reflection on their role helps us to see that it is controversial for Striker to assume that we will find it difficult to accept that happiness is our final end in all that we do. It all depends, of course, how happiness is conceived. If we have in mind a modern conception of happiness, then it will seem strange to assume that that is what we all have as an ultimate end. But the ancient conception of happiness or *eudaimonia* functions differently. We can see this both from the point that for the ancients, but

not for us, it is trivially true that we all seek happiness as our final end,<sup>19</sup> and from the point that for the ancients it is also trivially true that any candidate must meet the formal conditions of being complete and self-sufficient, whereas this is for us not only not trivially true but a matter on which intuitions conflict.<sup>20</sup> This suggests that if we reject what Striker regards as the dubious claim, we are rejecting something structurally basic to ancient theories. What she regards as the more cautious claim is more in tune with our ideas about happiness, but misses something central about the ancient conception of happiness and its role in moral theory.

It could be argued, indeed, that Striker underplays the really fundamental concept of Stoic ethics in being so little interested in the role in it of happiness. For what is most surprising in her account of Stoic ethics is that in it nothing motivates two of its most famous and central theses: that virtue is sufficient for happiness, and that virtue is the only thing that is good. On her account the Stoics have enough trouble getting to virtue from nature, never mind to the outrageous view that virtue is sufficient for happiness. Indeed she often stresses what she sees as Stoic defence of 'standard' morality (249, e.g.) so on her interpretation the strong claim that the virtuous person, whatever their circumstances, is happy appears not only like a claim beyond what the theory can deliver, it looks rather like a mistake, something that the theory should not even have tried to deliver. Certainly, the claim that only virtue is good appears merely as an oddity (277) which explains why the Stoic theory of the emotions, which looks so promising as an account of the emotions, goes wrong when it claims that we should not in fact have any. Yet it is surely more reasonable to see these two theses as central to Stoic ethics, rather than marginal and unfortunate. They are prominent in the ancient sources, as is the theory of indifferents, together with the Stoics' insis-

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19 See *Euthydemus* 278-9, *Symposium* 204-5, *Philebus* 20-3, 60-1.

20 I discuss this issue in 'Virtue and Eudaimonism', forthcoming in E.F. Paul, F.D. Miller, Jr., and J. Paul, eds., *Virtue and Vice* (New York: Cambridge University Press 1998) 37-55. The situation is not that we have a conception of happiness which is clearly distinct from the ancient one; rather, our intuitions about happiness are weak and divided (perhaps as a result of the different ways in which it has figured in modern philosophical theories) so that we can share the ancient views up to a point, but cannot be wholehearted about it.

tence on coining new words so that we shall not be tempted to deliberate in the same way about virtue and indifferents.

Striker's re-formulation of Stoic ethics presents it as a theory in which virtue is derived from a non-moral foundation in cosmic nature and eudaimonist concepts are not prominent. It contains internal conflict and also an odd insistence on the value of virtue which does not seem to have any plausible genesis within the theory itself. It seems reasonable to try to produce a more sympathetic interpretation, one which can appeal to that eudaimonistic tradition to explain both ways in which the Stoic theory is similar to other ancient theories, and ways in which it differs. Here the groundwork has already been laid by ancient debates, particularly those reported by Cicero, in which we can see the developed form of debates between the Stoic and the Peripatetics on the role of virtue in happiness and related matters.<sup>21</sup>

Striker charges that, 'If the Stoics misdescribed virtue in order to guarantee its unwavering stability, they also, I think, misdescribed happiness in order to make it depend upon nothing but ourselves' (280). We might ask ourselves whether we are antecedently sure that the Stoics are talking about virtue and happiness in just the same way that we do. Given our concepts, these do appear strange and unmotivated things to claim. But if we try to come at the sense of the Stoic claims by looking at the role and status of virtue and happiness in ancient debate we can see the possibility of a more sympathetic interpretation. Given the ancient conception of virtue, as the disposition of the ideally virtuous person, we can see how the ideal of virtue might be that of a disposition that is not merely reliable but utterly reliable. And given the ancient conception of happiness, as an unspecific conception of our final end which awaits more precise characterization, we can see how virtue might come to be a candidate for fulfilling the formal conditions. If virtue is sufficient for happiness, then happiness depends on nothing but ourselves, since virtue does. Is this such a strange idea? We can try to achieve a sympathetic interpretation of ancient discussions of this idea, and it does not require an excessive respect for the ancient texts to find an interpretation

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21 On Striker's interpretation, it is hard to see how these would be the debates which arose; the extensive debates in Cicero and the long accounts in Arius Didymus would seem to be focussing on marginal matters. But surely this is not the right attitude to our major pieces of good evidence.

for this in which it does not come out obviously false, as it clearly would for modern understandings of virtue and happiness.

I have, as reviewers do, concentrated on areas to criticize — areas where I find Striker's interpretation to depend on an understanding of the key concepts of ancient ethics, and particularly of Stoic ethics, which is not only modern but in my view prone to engage the ancients in debate without first examining what we are bringing to the table. I should end by repeating how fundamental to any discussion of ancient ethics this collection of essays is. Anyone interested in ancient ethics should read it. As I have said, this turns out to be not just a profitable exercise but an enjoyable one. I will end by repeating the note of gratitude that these papers are now more widely accessible.

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