

Modal Ethics:

The Role of CounterFactuals in Stoicism

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Abstract

This paper argues that interpreting Stoic compatibilism through the lens of Chrysippus' modal logic (specifically his account of counterfactual possibility) reveals a broader understanding of moral responsibility than is typically discussed. Moreover, this understanding suits the school's emphasis on human nature and moral improvement. To the Stoics, the moral agent is considered responsible for all acts of assent (and thus all impulses, beliefs and thoughts) but modal responsibility goes beyond this. If the agent is considered responsible in the presence of a counterfactual opportunity to act otherwise - even in circumstances that she was not immediately able to control – then she is forced to consider the notion of internal consistency and temporalised understanding of external hindrance employed by Chrysippean possibility. Thus, moral responsibility understood this way encompasses an understanding of the agent's nature as a being that is teleologically capable of virtue and a consideration of her future moral development. The paper attempts to consider the interweaving system of logic, physics and ethics in a holistic manner to reveal the full scope of Stoic responsibility.

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Introduction

The world of the Stoics is, famously, a divinely provident one. Everything that happens is infused with the intelligence and reason of Zeus¹ and, while the things around us will all inevitably burn away, the world will recur again exactly as before.² The impact of this doctrine is vast, leaving the Stoics committed both to the notion that the way of the world around us is, in fact, the best way for it to be and to the notion that everything that happens will happen one way and one way only. The Stoics are determinists, believers in the inevitability of fate. The Stoics are also – perhaps even more famously – moralists. Human nature is conceived of as geared towards virtue³, which is the only rational goal in life and the only way to be truly happy.⁴ However, virtue and vice are perceived as a dichotomy; if a person is not virtuous, then they are vicious⁵ and, as it transpires, practically no one is virtuous.⁶ So, the school envisioned humanity as a group of wretched sinners, striving to become virtuous in a deterministic universe. The tension between these two aspects of Stoic doctrine has been the subject of much discussion and scholarship over the centuries; how do the Stoics maintain a concept of moral responsibility that is compatible with their conception of fate? This paper explores some of the answers to that question and to another; what is the nature of the concept of moral responsibility that arises as a result?

Stoicism was conceived as an interweaving system of logic, physics and ethics⁷, which all coincide on the topic of moral responsibility. This paper argues that interpreting Stoic compatibilism through the lens of Chrysippus' modal logic (specifically his account of

¹¹ A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers Volume 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) (hereafter "LS"), 46A.

² LS 46G, C.

³ LS 60H.

⁴ LS 63A, C.

⁵ LS 61I.

⁶ LS 61N.

⁷ Diogenes Laertius, "Lives of Eminent Philosophers" (Perseus.tufts.edu) (hereafter "DL"), 7.40.

counterfactual possibility) reveals a broader understanding of moral responsibility. To the Stoics, the moral agent is responsible for all her impulses and all her thoughts and possibly even more than this. If the agent is considered responsible in the presence of a counterfactual opportunity to act otherwise - even in circumstances that she was not immediately able to control – then she is forced to consider the notion of internal consistency and temporalised understanding of external hindrance employed by Chrysippean possibility. Thus, moral responsibility understood this way encompasses an understanding of the agent's nature as a being that is teleologically capable of virtue and a consideration of her future moral development. I believe this exemplifies the rich and dynamic scope of Stoic responsibility that suits the school's focus on introspection, human nature and moral improvement.

This paper begins with a discussion of Stoic modal logic and the unique approach to possibility taken by Chrysippus. Then I will discuss Stoic compatibilism, argued for on both metaphysical and logical grounds and argue for the inclusion of the latter. Thirdly, I will suggest that, when considered in conjunct with the Chrysippean account of possibility, Stoic moral responsibility is both more demanding and less intuitive than typically characterised. In Part 4, I will demonstrate that this account of responsibility is compatible with and complementary to the wider Stoic framework.

Part 1: A Unique Approach to Modality

In this section I will explain the aspects of Stoic modal logic that pertain to the upcoming discussion of compatibilism: specifically, the Chrysippean definition of possibility, its temporal dimension and its metaphysical quirks.

a) Stoic Logic; the Basics

Stoic modal logic is not the propositional modal logic that contemporary readers are familiar with; there is no “ $\Box \varphi \rightarrow \Diamond \varphi$ ”. Rather, modality is a property of propositions and expressed in the meta-language.⁸ The object language of Stoic logic consists of various kinds of truth-functional *axiomata* or “propositions” or “assertibles”.⁹ Diogenes Laertius provides three types of properties applied to propositions in the meta-language: truth and falsehood, modalities and certain epistemic properties (*eulogon*, *pithanon*).¹⁰ The latter category is of little relevance to this enquiry.

On truth, it is important to note that the Stoics employed a temporalised concept of truth and falsehood. To say that a proposition is true is to say that it is *true right now* or *true at time t_0* as opposed to generally, unchangingly true.¹¹ This is the case for some modalities too; a proposition can be possible at t_n but no longer possible at t_{n+1} .¹²

b) Modal Definitions and Time

⁸ Not all the sources used are strict in applying modal terms only to propositions, instead referring to events as possible or necessary. While this may, on occasion, be an acceptable short-hand, I shall endeavour to keep the discussion precise.

⁹ DL 7.68.

¹⁰ DL 7.75-6.

¹¹ DL 7.65.

¹² As the upcoming definitions of (im)possibility and (non)necessity describe the propositions’ admission of temporal truth or falsehood, it can be extrapolated that the validity of “ φ is possible” varies temporally.

Chrysippus is said to have employed four modal properties that can be applied to a proposition: possibility, impossibility, necessity and non-necessity.¹³ The following is given by Diogenes Laertius:

Further, some propositions are possible, some impossible, and some necessary, some non-necessary. Possible is that which admits of being true and which is not prevented by external factors from being true, such as "Diocles is alive." Impossible is that which does not admit of being true <or admits of being true but is prevented by external factors from being true>, such as "The earth flies." Necessary is that which is true and does not admit of being false or admits of being false but is prevented by external factors from being false, such as "Virtue is beneficial." Non-necessary is that which both is true and is capable of being false and is not prevented by external factors from being false, such as "Dion is walking."¹⁴

Each definition has two conditions: the proposition's internal admission of truth and external factors that can prevent truth. With the temporalised concept of truth discussed above in mind, it is important to consider when these conditions apply in order to define these concepts fully. There is some indication in Boethius, who defines the Stoic "impossible" as

¹³ Bobzien makes a more substantive case for considering these definitions to be Chrysippean. The surviving sources on Stoic modal definitions do not specify a source but Bobzien believes that the overlap in material between these and writings that do name Chrysippus (e.g. Cicero, Plutarch) is good reason to suspect he was the author. It is my understanding that this is not too controversial – Chrysippus is considered the originator of most-if-not-all Stoic logic and the later commentaries and chronologies are considered fairly reliable in their recreation. In this project, I am predominantly interested in the reports of Diogenes Laertius, Cicero and Alexander of Aphrodisias and (while the latter is arguably a hostile source) their understanding of the logic is broadly accepted as accurate.

Additionally, if Epictetus is correct in the claim that Cleanthes and Antipater denied that true propositions concerning the past are necessary (see Part 1.d), then it follows that they would have subscribed to a different definition of necessity to the one described here - a true proposition concerning past events would be externally prevented from being false and thus necessary by the above definitions - and thus they cannot have shared the same definitions as Chrysippus.

See: Susanne Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998, 119-22.

¹⁴ DL 7.75. Translation from LS 38D.

that which will never be true, demonstrating that, as one would expect¹⁵, the factors contributing to the modality of a proposition obtain at future times.¹⁶ Bobzien interprets the relevant timeframe of the hindrances as whether they are present now, or at some time after now.¹⁷ This approach gives the truth conditions of Chrysippean modal properties as the following:

1. A proposition is (currently) possible if it is internally capable of being true at some time and is not externally hindered from being true at some time from now on.
2. A proposition is (currently) impossible if it is either internally incapable of ever being true, or it is externally hindered from being true at all times from now on.
3. A proposition is (currently) necessary if it is either internally incapable of ever being false, or it is internally capable of being false but is externally hindered from being false at all times from now on.
4. A proposition is (currently) non-necessary if it is internally capable of being false at some time and nothing external hinders it from being false at some time from now on.

I will be using these definitions (1 in particular) for the duration of this paper. However, there is another aspect of their temporal dimension that needs to be held in mind. In addition to the above, Brennan specifies that the hindrance obtains for some time frame relative to the duration of the predicate of the proposition. i.e. “Dion walks” is possible if Dion is not hindered from walking over some relevant time period to which his walking pertains.¹⁸ This move is seemingly made to preserve some intuition about what “possible” typically means. If

¹⁵ I say this is expected because if the truth conditions need only obtain at the moment of utterance, then by definition all true propositions would be necessary and all false propositions impossible. If Dion is lying down, for example, he is at this precise moment hindered from walking by his being horizontal. But “Dion is walking” is surely possible. Thus, while meta-language modal statements pertain to what is or is not currently possible or necessary, they refer to factors that obtain beyond current circumstances.

¹⁶ Boethius. “Boethius’ First Commentary on Aristotle On Interpretation 9”, 235.1.

¹⁷ Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom*, 114.

Also (with Jonathan Barnes and Mario Mignucci), “Logic” in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, ed. Algra, Barnes, Mansfeld and Schofield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 119-20.

¹⁸ Tad Brennan, *The Stoic Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 262.

Dion has broken his leg, there is a sense in which it is intuitive to say that Dion *cannot* walk right now and therefore (it is intuitive to say that) “Dion walks” is not rendered possible merely because that hindrance will be gone at some time in the future when his leg eventually heals. While I understand what motivates this, I want to push back against Brennan’s particular approach. After all, it is also intuitive to say that Dion can walk, *but not right now*. Moreover, while Bobzien’s open-ended approach to the timeframe of Stoic modal definitions may appear counterintuitive to some, it is not without its merits. While it is reasonable to interpret from the texts that modalities are temporalised and that they pertain to the future, to introduce a cap on that future time within the definition is not textually supported and, moreover, it is not necessary.¹⁹ The intuition that Brennan wishes to capture can be (partially) expressed not in the timeframe of the modal statement, but in the nature of the hindrances themselves.

c) External Hindrances

Each modality has two aspects to it: its internal ability to admit truth and the external circumstance which affect its truth value. There is a need to further narrow down what role the external hindrance is playing in these definitions; what is it external to and what even constitutes a hindrance of this sort? Sources provide a limited number of examples but from the definitions provided by Diogenes, it follows that “Diocles is alive” (“ζῆ Διοκλῆς”) is not externally prevented from being true and that “Dion is walking” (“περιπατεῖ Δίων”) is not externally prevented from being false.

¹⁹ If this were object language statements about strict *ability* to perform an act at a given time, then Brennan’s interpretation would be more welcome, but this is about the possibility of object language statements which need not conform to the same intuitions. That is not to imply that counterintuitive results would be unexpected on the Stoic account. The school is known for its self-aware paradoxical reasoning and - as will become apparent in Part 3 - there are reasons to embrace the less intuitive interpretation of this account beyond the lack of historical backing to do otherwise.

De Harven considers the Chrysippean concepts of possibility and necessity to encompass three senses of the terms: logical, metaphysical and providential. For a Chrysippean possible proposition, its internal ability to admit truth is understood as encompassing both logical consistency— that which is logically possible is neither self-contradictory nor inconceivable - and some understanding of the metaphysical nature of the subject of the proposition. In De Harven’s words, “*Metaphysically possible is what the metaphysical principles and natures allow regardless of the external circumstances.*”²⁰ For example, it is in the nature of Dion to be a thing that walks so “Dion is walking” is *metaphysically* possible. The external hindrances are taken to be external to both the logical form and the subject of the proposition.²¹ This is where de Harven places the concept of *providential* possibility. That which is providentially possible is that which is not (externally) prevented from being true by the causal nexus and the machinations of fate. So, “Diocles is alive” is *providentially possible* because the external causal nexus has not yet killed him.

What we have, then, is a formal, logical aspect to possibility and two separate physical notions: an internal notion of the nature of the subject and an external notion of the state of the world around it. Bobzien argues that the reason for the presence of this second physical notion is in a disagreement between Chrysippus’ modal definitions and those of Philo.²² While both consider (logical and metaphysical) internal admission of truth a necessary condition of possibility, only Philo considered this to be sufficient for possibility. Alexander of Aphrodisias²³ presents Philo as taking it to be possible for an atomised stick of wood to burn, likewise a piece of wood that is stuck under the ocean, because it is in the nature of wood to burn. Chrysippus is said to have

²⁰ Vanessa de Harven, “Necessity, Possibility and Determinism in Stoic Thought” in *Logical Modalities from Aristotle to Carnap: The Story of Necessity* ed. Cresswell, Mares & Rini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 2.

²¹ De Harven, “Necessity, Possibility and Determinism”, 3-4, 6.

²² Bobzien, *Freedom and Determinism*, 108-112.

²³ Alexander, *Aristotle’s Prior Analytics* 183.34-184.10 or LS, 38B.

disagreed with Philo however, wishing to introduce some restriction on what could be considered possible. For Chrysippus then, it is not possible for the stick to burn because it is externally prevented from burning. But why is it that being trapped at the bottom of the sea affects the possibility of “This stick burns” when simply being away from fire does not?

I believe the answer lies in the permanence of the type of hindrance in question. Consider the difference between someone unable to see due to having been blinded and someone who is unable to see without glasses – the difference between Oedipus and Velma from Scooby-doo, if you will. Is “This person sees” possible in both scenarios? Hopefully, the intuition that “Velma sees” is possible, even when she has temporarily lost her glasses, and that “Oedipus sees” is not possible at any time after his disfigurement is clear. Both “Oedipus sees” and “Velma sees” are internally consistent; they do not self-contradict and both subjects are seeing-things by nature.²⁴ In either scenario, the agent is externally hindered from seeing at the time of utterance. But in the blindness case, that hindrance has permanence; it is the sort of thing that will obtain for all $t_{n \geq 0}$ whereas lacking glasses is something that obtains at t_0 and may or may not obtain later. In this way, there is a restriction of the scope of alternative scenarios being considered. Miracle cures for blindness are not a factor in Oedipus’ story, whereas Velma finding her glasses is, *regardless of whether it occurs*, a possibility. The stick that has been atomised, or is trapped underwater, is like Oedipus; permanently prevented from fulfilling its nature to burn.

I think this is the best (if not entirely unproblematic) way to understand the external hindrance. Chrysippus is trying to maintain a reasonable scope of alternatives within his use

²⁴ Human beings are organisms which see; they are, to the ancients, *teleologically* disposed to seeing. The Stoics in particular took sensory capacities to be part of a fully functioning soul (e.g. LS 53H). I chose Oedipus as an example as opposed to someone who was born blind to avoid the question of whether the Stoics would consider a blind-since-birth person to be by nature blind or by nature sighted, yet impaired. The answer is likely the latter, given their teleological view of human nature, although it is arguable that such a view on disability is short-sighted.

of possibility by discounting the scenarios with permanent hindrances. However, the propositions without such permanent hindrances remain possible, regardless of whether they ever become true. The remaining discussion in this section concerns the status of these cases.

d) Future Contingents and Counterfactual Possibility

For more detail, it is necessary to consider the Chrysippus' response to Diodorus' "Master Argument", which demonstrates the conflict over counterfactual possibility statements between Chrysippus (and others) and Diodorus. To paraphrase Epictetus²⁵ and Alexander²⁶, Diodorus argued that the following three propositions cannot be consistent with each other:

1. All past truths are necessary.
2. An impossibility cannot follow from a possibility.
3. Something is possible that neither is nor will ever be true.

Diodorus himself rejected the 3rd statement, whereas (according to Epictetus) the Stoics Cleanthes, Panthoides and Antipater rejected the 1st. Chrysippus rejected the 2nd. It is the latter's approach that is of interest here, but it is noteworthy that the other Stoics, despite disagreement, unite on the need to preserve the truth of 3; all four thinkers were committed to the possibility of (some) propositions that never actually admit truth. This is an indication that such counterfactual possibility statements (i.e. a possible proposition ϕ where ϕ is false at all t_n) were not seen as dispensable to early Stoics.

Chrysippus' rejection of 2 is unsurprising following on from the previous discussion. If the modality of a proposition is temporalised, its current possibility does not ensure that it will not be impossible at a future time. More pertinently, the groundwork for the preservation of

²⁵ Epictetus, *Discourses*, 2.19 1-5.

²⁶ Alexander of Aphrodisias, *On Aristotle's Prior Analytics*, 177.25-178.10

the 3rd premise is also clear; the conditions for possibility do not depend on the proposition itself ever being true. A proposition's possibility depends only on its internal ability to admit truth and on the non-permanence of any external hindrances to truth. However, there is nonetheless a strangeness to Chrysippus' response to Diodorus, given the wider metaphysical background this discussion takes place in.

The Stoic emphasis on the inevitability and divine providence of fate is a defining feature of their metaphysical story. There is only one world – one recurring cosmic order – and no “possible worlds” to consider. Is there any reason to preserve counterfactuals in this system? For Chrysippus in particular, why are necessity statements factual and tied to the determined reality when possibility statements can deviate from it? The answer to the latter question is that counterfactual possibility statements are not, in fact, only applicable in an abstract logical sense; there are metaphysical considerations built into the very definitions. As discussed above, the notion of possibility invoked appears to encompass ordinary notions of scope of alternatives and permanence of obstacles. If we consider a proposition counterfactually possible in the Stoic sense, we are not simply making a claim about some abstract logical property, but about what future options are legitimate alternatives, which future external circumstances are featured or not featured.

The former question is considerably harder to answer. Chrysippus could have simply accepted Diodorus' position – that a proposition must be true at some time in order to be possible. Clearly, this is not what Chrysippus took “possible” (δύνατον) to mean but it is not clear why that was. However, one possible motivator for this move to preserve counterfactual possibility is its applicability to the Stoic account of compatibilism.²⁷ The relationship

²⁷ And even if it is not what originally motivated Chrysippus' position, it is certainly associated with it today, as will be discussed in Part 2.b.

between this particular type of counterfactual possibility and moral responsibility in a determined world will fuel the rest of this discussion.

Part 2: Compatibilism

In this section I will first consider Stoic compatibilism from two metaphysical arguments attributed to Chrysippus. Then I will discuss the notion of “counterfactual opportunity” and argue for its inclusion in the account.

I am approaching Chrysippean compatibilism here as the claim that a determinist picture of the world is compatible with *moral responsibility* specifically. There is a ““free will” vs determinism” version of this conversation that I am deliberately side-lining. While freedom (ἐλευθερία) is not unimportant to the Stoic account (and is of particular interest to later Stoics) and there is some similarity between the Stoic account of assent and later conceptions of “will”, the focus of the sources used here is the compatibility of a determined cosmos and individual responsibility and/or ownership of one’s actions.²⁸

a) The Boxer and the Cylinder

In considering what it is that an agent is responsible for in the Stoic determinist system, I will consider two arguments attributed to Chrysippus: the counter to the “Idle Argument” and his division of causes. Both are argued by use of analogy, to a boxer fighting and a cylinder rolling. Respectively, these demonstrate that, for the Stoics, the decisions of an agent are

²⁸ To elaborate, it is arguable – and Sandbach (1989) does argue – that Chrysippus did not have any argument that could form the basis for a free will and thus the early Stoic account is solely concerned with attributing responsibility to agents and not the freedom of the agent’s choices.

See: F. H. Sandbach, "Fate and Free Will, Providence and Evil" in *The Stoics* (London, Bloomsbury Academic, 1989), 103-4.

It is clear, in any case, that whatever concept of a “free will” that could be retroactively applied to the Stoic account would likely not be what later thinkers had in mind; a negatively free power within the self that is able to defy fate. Their notion of freedom is a positive one; to Cooper, Stoic freedom is the freedom to live according to virtue and not defined as freedom of choice per se.

See: John M. Cooper, "Stoic Autonomy" in *Knowledge, Nature and the Good: Essays on Ancient Philosophy* (Princeton University Press, 2004), 209-10.

This is the approach favoured by Epictetus – a Stoic of the Imperial period who devoted much more attention to ἐλευθερία (especially in *Discourses* 4.1). Here freedom is presented as attainable through conformity with virtue and the acceptance of fate. This is directly opposed to any understanding of freedom that encompasses control of one’s destiny.

See also: Rodrigo Sebastián Braicovich, "Freedom and Determinism in Epictetus' *Discourses*" in *The Classical Quarterly* Vol 60, no. 1 (2010), 202-20.

important despite fate - in fact human action is part of the nexus of fate - and that we can meaningfully distinguish between action that is “up to us” and that which is not.

The Idle Argument is presented by Cicero in *de Fato* as an attack on the determinist position, arguing for the futility of human action in the face of fate. His chosen example is that of someone suffering from an illness:

- i. If it is your fate to recover from illness, you will recover regardless of whether or not you call the doctor.
- ii. Likewise, if it is your fate to not recover from this illness, you will not recover, regardless of whether or not you call the doctor.
- iii. Either you are fated to recover or not.
- iv. Therefore, it is pointless to call the doctor.²⁹

Chrysippus is said to staunchly reject the first two premises; your recovery cannot be considered without considering the decision to call the doctor. It is not the case that an outcome is fated regardless of the agent’s choice, rather both the agent’s choice and the outcome are co-fated. He employs the analogy of the boxer, Hegesarchus, who is fated to win a fight without sustaining a single punch. But if he were to never put his guard up throughout the fight, this outcome would obviously not occur.³⁰ Crucially, what causes Hegesarchus to win the fight is his action. Chrysippus is arguing that if an outcome is fated, its relevant antecedents must also be. Although the outcomes of an agent’s choices are determined, her choosing still occurs and is indispensable step in the causal chain.

This answers the most literal interpretation of the Idle Argument. However, made less clear by Cicero is the existential frustration it attempts to capture – my actions are not my own and my choices do not matter. This is brought out by Brennan, who points out that Chrysippus

²⁹ Cicero, *de Fato*, 28-30. Translation (edited) from LS 55S.

³⁰ LS, 62F.

had failed to address the concern that our choices are fated events that happen to us or through us but are ultimately not our own. To Brennan, nothing in Chrysippus' response alleviates the worry that our choices are nothing more than the machinations of fate.³¹ This is in disagreement with Chrysippus, however, who employed the following analogy of the cylinder to attempt to demonstrate that we can meaningfully consider certain causes to be our own:

According to Cicero³², Chrysippus considered there to be two types of cause: perfect and primary (*perfectae et principales*) and auxiliary and proximate (*adiuvantes et proximae*). While the motion of a cylinder rolling down a hill may have been caused, in the proximate sense, by being pushed, the motion is also being caused, in the primary sense, by the cylinder's roundness and disposition to roll. Proximate causes happen to objects and people, and are outside of the agent's control, whereas primary causes are an expression of the disposition of an object or person. The kinds of things that are the proximate causes of our actions are that which occurs regardless of us. Specifically, our impressions of the world around us which occur to us involuntarily. Our assent to these impressions, on the other hand, is a primary cause. This is the interpretation favoured by Hankinson³³ and, more recently, Coope makes the case that assent is the primary cause of our actions while our impressions occur to us involuntarily.³⁴ So, due to the primary cause of assent being within the agent - being "up to her" - the agent can be considered the cause of her impulses, and thus responsible for them.

I do not wish to imply that Chrysippus has answered all the incompatibilist worries with this response. The Stoics have here asserted that there is a meaningful class of action to be

³¹ Brennan, *The Stoic Life*, 280.

³² Cicero, *de Fato* 39-43 or LS 62C.

³³ R.J. Hankinson, "Determinism and Indeterminism." in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, 530.

³⁴ Ursula Coope, "Rational Assent and Self-Reversion: A Neoplatonist Response to The Stoics" in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* Vol 50 ed Victor Caston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 238.

responsible for and have more-or-less assumed that this is the case. Although I believe that, when taken together, the boxer and cylinder arguments take some pressure off the Stoic account – it places the burden on the incompatibilist (or radical anti-determinist) to make the case that this internal decision making is not sufficiently up to us – the broader, existential worry set out by Brennan remains. Stough writes that the Stoic concept of what is *eph'hēmin* or “up to us” in this sense is best understood as “attributable to us”, but ultimately not “in our power” the way an Aristotelian scholar would understand the term.³⁵ Similarly, if someone is concerned that a deterministic system renders their choices powerless and, ultimately, meaningless, then Chrysippus’s analogies will not offer much comfort.

What is clear is that this is where Chrysippus chooses to draw the line; an agent is responsible for that which she assents to because this is the primary cause of her actions. The auxiliary causes in the world around her are not up to her, and thus they do not prevent her choices from being her own.

b) Choice and the Counterfactual Opportunity

In this section I will discuss what the modalities introduced in Part 1 add to the compatibilism outlined above and how an agent’s choice can be understood as being between her actual outcome and a counterfactual opportunity to assent otherwise. Much of the existing discourse of the subject concerns that apparent lack of necessity of future propositions in Stoic logic. Brennan takes Chrysippus’ position³⁶ to be an attempt to remove necessity from an account of future events in order to smooth over the problem of determinism³⁷, Bobzien takes Chrysippus as considering propositions concerning the future to be non-necessary and that

³⁵ Charlotte Stough, “Stoic Determinism and Moral Responsibility” in *The Stoics* ed. Rist (London: University of California Press, 1978), 208.

³⁶ Brennan specifically takes Chrysippus’ account of prophecy (Cicero, *de fato* 12-15) to be an argument that propositions that will be true in the future are not necessitated by past truths.

³⁷ Brennan, *The Stoic life*, 262.

this is a crucial element of his compatibilism³⁸. Similar stances are taken up by Stough³⁹, Long and Sedley⁴⁰ and Hankinson⁴¹⁴². While the role that necessity plays in this story is interesting, it is the counterfactual *possibility* statement that is of greater interest to my inquiry.⁴³

There is a common understanding of responsibility that is based in the availability of alternative opportunities to act. If a strict vegan were imprisoned and only fed meat, she would likely not be considered responsible for eating meat as there were no real alternatives available to her. This intuition can be represented thus:

“I am responsible for ϕ -ing, if it is possible for me to $\neg\phi$ ”

Adjusting for a Stoic treatment of modality as a meta-language property, and a Chrysippean sense of possible, it can be converted to the following:

“I am responsible for ϕ -ing at t_0 , if, at t_0 , “I do not ϕ ” is internally capable of admitting truth and not externally prevented from being true at some time $t_{n \geq 0}$ ”

The intuition in the case of the vegan is that what has rendered her not responsible is that she had no opportunity to act appropriately. This exact intuition can be captured on the Stoic account; the vegan is responsible for eating meat right now if “She does not eat meat” is internally capable of admitting truth and not externally prevented from being true at some

³⁸ Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom*, 310-13.

³⁹ Stough, “Stoic Determinism”, 216-7.

⁴⁰ LS, 62 Appendix.

⁴¹ Hankinson, “Determinism and Indeterminism”, 528.

⁴² Long and Sedley, Stough, Brennan and Hankinson all explore the idea that the separation of causes employed in the cylinder analogy is an attempt to separate necessitation from the determined causal nexus (much in the style of Anscombe in contemporary metaphysics). That topic is primarily concerned with metaphysical necessity (in the modern sense) and not with modalities as metalanguage properties, hence its exclusion from the discussion here.

⁴³ Of course, if future true propositions were necessary, this would eliminate counterfactual possibility from the picture entirely.

time after now. She is being force-fed, so the proposition is externally prevented from being true.⁴⁴ Hence, we can consider her not responsible.

My responsibility, then, occurs only when “I do not ϕ ” is not internally capable of truth or for the truth of this proposition to be externally prevented in the permanent way discussed in Part 1.c. So, in the example of stealing, an agent, Sally, burgles a house at t_0 . At this time, “Sally does not steal” is false. However, “Sally does not steal” is not self-contradictory, “not stealing” is consistent with the nature of Sally and nothing external to Sally is preventing “Sally does not steal” from being true. It is false, but possible at t_0 by Chrysippean definitions; it is counterfactually possible – Sally had a counterfactual opportunity to do otherwise, but nevertheless chose to steal. For the Sally to have no opportunity to refrain from robbing the house, “Sally does not steal” would have to be impossible. This impossibility must be due to the external conditions (as the proposition meets the logical and metaphysical internal requirements for possibility) so Sally could only be considered non-responsible for stealing in a circumstance where she was prevented from not doing so by something external to her and something of a permanent type.

This picture of Stoic responsibility as including such counterfactual opportunities is argued for by Long and Sedley, who consider a “counter-factual opportunity to do otherwise” a crucial aspect of Stoic moral responsibility⁴⁵, and by Brennan⁴⁶. The latter characterises an act as “up to” the agent if she has a counterfactual opportunity to act otherwise and presents this as an authentic Stoic view. However, he is critical of the efficacy of the response for two reasons. The first of which is the following:

⁴⁴ For the sake of the example, let us assume that the conditions of her imprisonment are permanent.

⁴⁵ LS, 38 Appendix & 62 Appendix.

⁴⁶ Brennan, *The Stoic Life*, 263.

Brennan argues that if Sally has a disposition to steal things, then “Sally does not steal” would be internally inconsistent, as her dispositions are a result of her assent and thus internal to her. Therefore, to Brennan, the counterfactual opportunity would never be possible in the case of the vicious agent. Although the case Brennan makes here is brief (and perhaps somewhat tongue-in-cheek), it relates to an important point that I wish to emphasize. Brennan explicitly calls on Chrysippus’ analogy of the cylinder which draws a distinction between what is internal and external to the agent and places the agent’s dispositions in the internal category and applies this distinction to the definition of possible. He is not unique in this; Botros makes the same move, taking the concept of internal in the modal definitions to be the same as that in the cylinder analogy.⁴⁷ However, I do not believe that the internal/external distinction made in the cylinder analogy is exactly the same distinction being made when evaluating the modality of a proposition.

The cylinder analogy distinguishes between what is outside of an agent’s mind and what is within it. This is not the same distinction between the internal and external made in the modal definitions in Part 1. In contrast, the examples of internal consistency in the existing modal examples (e.g. wood and burning) distinguish between that which is of the nature of the subject and that which is not. This nature is broader and more general than personal dispositions; it is the nature of the type of thing that the subject is. What is the nature of Sally? Sally is an adult woman. She is, to the Stoics, a rational animal and thus it is in her nature to contemplate appearances, give and withhold assent and to conform with reason and virtue.⁴⁸ To the Stoics, “An adult human does the appropriate act” or “An adult human does

⁴⁷ Sophie Botros, "Freedom, Causality, Fatalism and Early Stoic Philosophy" in *Phronesis* Vol 30, no. 3 (1985), 283-4.

⁴⁸ Technically, as Sally is not the sage, she is incapable of virtuous acts (*katorthomata*) but this technicality does not make too much difference here. She is capable of performing *kathēkonta* (acts that externally align with virtuous acts but do not stem from a virtuous *diathesis*) which definitely includes acts such as not stealing. Moreover, her immediate viciousness cannot be understood as an inherent barrier to virtue because Stoic doctrine contradicts that reading. Humans are, to the Stoics, teleologically aimed towards virtue, inherently capable of conforming to reason and the kind of beings that are virtuous by nature. See: LS 60H, 61L, 53T.

not do the inappropriate act” will never be internally inconsistent because accordance with virtue is, ultimately, natural to us.

In the next section, I will examine Brennan’s second objection which is one shared by other scholars.

c) Relevance of Modality

Before continuing, I should observe that not everyone considers Stoic modal logic to be important to their compatibilism. It is worth engaging with such objections. Salles argues against its inclusion on two fronts:

1) There is no historical basis for thinking that Chrysippus thought his modal logic should be applied to his compatibilism.

2) Compatibilism as argued from distinguishing two types of cause is intended as sufficient and thus a modal account is not needed.⁴⁹

This second sentiment is echoed by Botros who also rejects that the Stoic understanding of what is “up to us” requires the possibility of alternative options.⁵⁰ Likewise, Brennan - despite disagreeing with 1) and arguing that the inclusion of modality in Stoic compatibilism is authentic - agrees with the second claim: He argues that the non-necessity of future statements and the possibility of counterfactuals comes across as an arbitrary logical distinction that does not bear on the reality of the situation. For this reason, Brennan takes modalism to be an unconvincing justification for compatibilism that is superfluous to the Stoic account.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Ricardo Salles, *The Stoics on Determinism and Compatibilism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 84.

⁵⁰ Botros, "Freedom, Causality, Fatalism", 282-3.

⁵¹ Brennan, *The Stoic Life*, 265-6.

To grapple Salles' historical claim in full would go far beyond the scope of this paper.

However, it is important to remember that Stoicism is conceived of as an interwoven system therefore there is reason to think that logic, physics and ethics would overlap at times.⁵²

While I agree on the importance of being careful in interpretation and not *assuming* the applicability of logic to this topic, their modal logic in particular is not presented as separate from the physics, as discussed in Part 1.d. Moreover, the responses to the Master Argument shows that counterfactual possibility statements are preserved in the Stoic system, despite being discarded by some of their contemporaries; it is not unreasonable to explore their applicability and posit why the Stoics might have a use for such statements. While I acknowledge that the historical authenticity of modal compatibilism is not as certain as the metaphysical arguments in Part 2.a, I still consider it worthy of inquiry.

The second claim that the distinction between causes is a sufficient basis for Stoic compatibilism is more potent. I am inclined to agree with Brennan that Stoic modality is unlikely to convince an incompatibilist that his choices are ultimately meaningful. In this sense, I think it is fair to say that modality does not complete an otherwise lacking account of compatibilism. However, that is not to say that an application of modal concepts here does not enrich the Stoic account in any way. When considering counterfactual opportunities with the definition of possibility developed in Part 1, modal compatibilism can offer more than the abstract logical background that Brennan presents it as. Specifically, by understanding that for which an agent is morally responsible as that which it is possible for her not to do – with a Chrysippean understanding of possible – we must consider what external obstacles obtain in her future. From here, a deeper understanding of the agent's responsibility is revealed.

⁵² Reports from Plutarch and Ammonius even give priority to logic over ethics and physics in the Stoic system. In any case, it is clear that logic was never conceived as separable from the rest. See: LS 26C & E.

Part 3: What Ought I Consider Myself Responsible For?

In this section I will explore in more detail the consequences of Stoic moral responsibility, in particular the repercussions of applying Chrysippean modalities in the way described in Part 2.b. This is where I wish to incorporate the moralising aspect of Stoicism discussed in the introduction. My angle of approach is deliberately skewed from the perspective of an agent considering her own actions and whether or not she *should* consider herself responsible; whether – to use the Stoic jargon – it is *kathēkon* or appropriate for an agent to assent to “I am responsible for φ-ing”.

a) What Is Up to Us

The Stoic expression “ἐφ’ ἡμῖν” (*eph’ hēmin*) is usually translated as “up to us” or “attributable to us” and is used both to denote that which can be considered an agent’s action and what she should concern herself with because of this. As seen in Part 2.a, what is up to the agent is what is that which is *primarily* caused by her assent. I will briefly unpack the consequences of this here.

Assent is a major component of the Stoic’s psychological model. It is, broadly, the acceptance of a φαντασία (*phantasia*) or “impression” – to take something that appears to you to be true. This assent is therefore needed for forming beliefs and for action itself, as assenting to an impression is necessary for impulse.⁵³⁵⁴ Therefore, if what is “up to us” is what we have assented to, then all our beliefs and all of our impulses are up to us. This is a

⁵³ LS 53Q, S.

⁵⁴ Inwood’s account of the Stoic doctrine of impulse goes into more detail on this matter. For my purposes, the most important thing to take from this is that assent plays an indispensable role in both belief formation and action itself. In fact, it is both necessary and sufficient for both. See: Brad Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 62–66.

broad scope for moral responsibility, albeit not a surprising one from a school of moralists; The agent is responsible for all her thoughts and hence all impulse and action.

“*Eph’hēmin*” is more than a descriptive term for what the agent is responsible for, however.

It is used to denote what the agent should concern herself with. As discussed in the introduction, a dutiful Stoic agent is aimed at becoming virtuous and this, fortunately, is something that is up to her. Reesor takes the Stoic agent to contribute to her moral development through forming conceptions (via assent) which will eventually change her disposition.⁵⁵ Stough, likewise, takes the cylinder analogy to show that external events are not what brings about change in the agent; that is purely a function of assent⁵⁶

When considering what is *eph’hēmin* from the perspective of what an agent ought to consider herself responsible for, it would appear that the agent ought to concern herself with her assent and not with the world external to her thoughts. Her impressions of the world around her (the *auxiliary* causes) are not what is up to her and thus her focus should be on her reactions to them, not their occurrence. This is what is typically taken to be the Stoic account and it is good interpretation. It ties in with other areas of Stoic doctrine⁵⁷ and captures an intuitive grasp of responsibility; the Stoic agent is responsible for anything she does on purpose. However, it does not capture the “lack of other options” nuance of the vegan case.⁵⁸ If that is a nuance we wish to preserve, we must consider counterfactual opportunities again.

b) Counterfactual Ethics

When we consider the ramifications of modal compatibilism, as embodied by the counterfactual opportunity statement, many of the same results arise; an agent’s concern

⁵⁵ Margaret Reesor, “Necessity and Fate in Stoic Philosophy” in *The Stoics* ed. Rist (University of California Press, 1978) 192-3.

⁵⁶ Stough, “Stoic Determinism”, 212.

⁵⁷ Specifically, the indifference of much of the external world (LS 58A) and the (apparently) internal account of action (64H).

⁵⁸ The vegan, after all, is eating the meat as a result of assent (because assent is necessary for action).

should be towards that which is understood as her own, and not the external circumstance. However, there is more to this version of the story when we consider the distinction between types of hindrance discussed in Part 1.c.

If “Velma sees” is possible despite her losing her glasses, then “Velma saves the gang from the monster” is possible even when Velma cannot currently see that they are in danger. The hindrance is of a non-permanent type, and thus cannot exempt the agent from responsibility. What is striking about this result is the intuitive unfairness of considering someone responsible for failing to do something that they were not, immediately, able to do.⁵⁹ Is it really Velma’s fault if she does not save her friends at a time when she is unable to see they are in danger? It certainly seems unfair to blame her. But it should not be assumed that considering Velma responsible for this (in)action must lead to special condemnation and punishment. She is vicious, but in the Stoic system, everybody is equally vicious.⁶⁰ To consider her responsible is not to condemn her as especially vicious, but to simply consider this failing to be her own despite it not being caused by an immediate act of assent. The question I want to explore is the following: from Velma’s perspective, is it appropriate for her to consider this failing to be her own? I argue that it is, for two reasons: a) An increased scope of what an agent should consider herself responsible is an enriched one. And b) By including Chrysippean possibility into the account of moral responsibility, it is possible to incorporate the Stoic position on human nature into their account of responsibility.

For point a), what if someone on the street asks you for money? They really need it, but you are not currently carrying cash. But, at some time after now, you will have access to cash; the

⁵⁹ I acknowledge that this is a result that does not occur with Brennan’s approach to the external hindrances discussed in Part 1.b and could be considered a reason to favour a “relevant time frame” interpretation. However, on top of my previous objections, I do not consider the consequences of this result to be at odds with the wider Stoic account (as the upcoming discussion reveals) and therefore would not recommend re-interpreting the modal definitions to better accommodate any such intuitions.

⁶⁰ LS 61S, T.

external hindrance is non-permanent. “You give this person money” is internally capable of truth and not externally hindered from truth at some time after now, hence it is possible now. If the role of counterfactual possibility in moral responsibility is taken seriously, you are responsible for neglecting this person, despite your lack of immediate ability to not do so. This result is not implied by the non-modal account of responsibility, but I believe, despite the counterintuitive nature of this result, there is reason to explore where the modal account leads. Despite the agent’s failure to give the needy person cash, there are options available to her:

1. Consider the failure to help this person as ultimately not up to her and proceed with her day
2. Consider the failure to help this person as a case where she should have done better, and plan to do better next time.

While this is in no way a real dichotomy, it is hopefully not controversial to consider the second option to be vastly superior to the first. The modal account of responsibility lends itself immediately to the second option; instead of ignoring that which she cannot immediately remedy, the agent evaluates this act as her responsibility in a forward-thinking sense to further her moral improvement. When the agent deliberates over whether or not she is responsible she has to consider whether the hindrance is a permanent one or not, she has to consider future scenarios in which she could help and she is not able to shrug the incident off. In the case of the vegan who can see no end to the external circumstance, she would find her dietary choices not up to her and focus her attention elsewhere. But the person who neglects the needy person in the street would conclude that this is something she should concern herself with. By considering herself responsible for not helping this person despite the current external hindrance, the agent is not complacent in her failure. “This person does her chores” is possible even as that person is having a lie in. “This person helps others” is still possible

when they have buried their head in the sand. Thus, understanding responsibility modally demonstrates the demanding nature of *kathēkonta*. Our duties, and our striving to be virtuous, keep us constantly pushing ourselves to be better.

For point b), as I asserted in Part 2.b, a human agent will never find themselves to be internally inconsistent with the correct course of action. “Sally does not steal” could, in some obscure scenario, be *externally* prevented from being true but it never internally. To use De Harven’s categorisation from Part 1.c, it is always *metaphysically possible* for an adult human to do the right (*kathēkon*) thing. So, if an agent is considering whether or not she is responsible for an act in terms of whether or not she had a counterfactual opportunity to do otherwise, she will be considering whether or not that act is in accordance with her nature as a rational animal as the first step. Elsewhere in the Stoic account, there is reason to think that self-perception of this kind – specifically perceiving oneself as a rational being capable of virtue – was a crucial step in the Stoic account of moral improvement. Klein argues that the Stoic concept of *oikeiosis* is a form of self-perception that is the step between having a nature that’s teleologically bound towards virtue and realising that virtuous state.⁶¹ I argue that if the agent is considering her responsibility in terms of modal-compatibilism, she inevitably engages in this kind of thinking that the Stoics placed at the core of their moral-improvement story. It is a way of considering what is “up to us” that very explicitly takes into account what our natures are. Stough argues that *eph’hēmin* is best translated as “attributable to us as human beings”⁶² and, while she thinks this is captured by the unique nature of human assent as a primary cause of an act, I think that the teleological aspect of our natures (the fact that we are beings that are aimed at virtue) is better captured on the modal account.

⁶¹ Jacob Klein, “The Stoic Argument from Oikeiōsis” in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* Volume 50 ed. Caston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) 179-91.

⁶² Stough, “Stoic Determinism”, 214.

While I am not arguing that an understanding of what is “up to us” based on the cylinder analogy and subsequent division of causes is an inadequate understanding of moral responsibility, I do think that it is a comparatively static view of the situation. Whereas considering counterfactual opportunities as part of the picture is dynamic; it forces the agent to consider her future moral improvement and to consider her nature as a rational animal that is capable of virtue. “What ought I consider myself responsible for?” is answered by the cylinder analogy as “I ought to consider myself responsible for my assent” which is a correct and fundamentally important part of the picture. But modal compatibilism provides a second, and valuable answer: “I ought to consider myself responsible for acting in a way that is compatible with my nature as a rational animal *whenever* I am not permanently prevented from doing so.”

The final part of this paper attempts to pre-emptively alleviate possible objections to considering someone responsible for something that they are not immediately able to control. I understand that to some this may be counter-intuitive but with a concept of moral responsibility that is geared towards introspection and thinking ahead, as opposed to one that is punitive and backwards facing, it is not an anomalous result if the agent is responsible for failings she cannot immediately control.

Part 4: What is Moral Responsibility for?

The title of this section is a question which I believe is often unexamined in discussions over compatibilism in general and Stoic compatibilism in particular. What is it exactly that the Stoics want to use their compatibilism to express? What role does this concept play in their ethics? Examining this question should shed light on the results of Part 3.

Alexander of Aphrodisias, an Aristotelian author, assumes that Stoic compatibilism would be used to reconstruct common intuitions about responsibility and serve as justification for condemnation and punishment.⁶³ But this should be treated as a claim from a source with a very different understanding of what is up to us and what it even means for something to be “up to us”. It should not be blindly accepted without examination. Firstly, writings from later adherents to Stoicism which examine praise and blame argue against the attribution of punishment and for an understanding of individual responsibility geared towards moral improvement. Secondly, the ecosystem of Stoicism complements this view and does not suggest an alternative.

a) Anti-Retributionism and Introspection in Imperial Stoicism

The Stoics’ stance on anger is well known – it is an emotion and a symptom of vice⁶⁴ – and they subsequently reject the pursuit of vengeance. What needs to be emphasised is that this is not simply a stance against the blind pursuit revenge when enraged, but a stance against the claim that vengeful, punitive acts are appropriate to perform on the basis of perceived wrongdoing.

Seneca’s *de Ira* argues against retributionism (i.e. punishment qua punishment) extensively. While conceding that certain punitive-seeming actions may be performed for other reasons

⁶³ Alexander of Aphrodisias, *To the Emperors on Fate and Responsibility*, 187.17-20, 207.5-21.

⁶⁴ LS, 65A, E & H.

(i.e. education, prevention), the reason for doing so should not be the mere fact of the victim's moral failure.⁶⁵ Moreover, any punishment-like response should not be aimed at harming the wrongdoer but at educating him.⁶⁶ To deem someone worthy of mistreatment due to their perceived harming of someone is to make a false, emotional judgement. The purpose of considering yourself responsible – specifically responsible for assenting to anger-inducing impressions – is to understand that you can avoid inappropriate action and improve yourself morally. The purpose of considering others responsible is to help them do the same. Seneca is not always the most reliable source, but it is key here that *de Ira* is a work that emphasises the agent's responsibility on the basis of the voluntary nature of assent does not conclude in favour of punishment.

Related ideas crop up in the therapeutic writings of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. The latter advises against arguing with those who behave poorly and judging them harshly in favour of focusing on oneself.⁶⁷ Epictetus expresses this same sentiment but provides more theoretical background as to why. Epictetus is not known for his logic – he openly admits to having no opinion on the Master Argument when recounting it – so his approach to moral responsibility is not the modal sort discussed in Parts 2 and 3. However, I think that this is worth considering alongside earlier sources when attempting to characterise Stoic moral responsibility.

Epictetus argues against blaming others for the wrongs they commit. Both because another person's actions are not truly able to harm you - supported by the Stoic doctrine on indifferents – and for epistemic reasons: all you can see is that this person has *appeared* to have acted badly. All you have access to is mere appearances, so you are not in a position to

⁶⁵ Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *de Ira*, 1.6.1, 1.6.4-5.

⁶⁶ Seneca, *de Ira*, 1.19.5.

⁶⁷ Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 4.5, 4.10, 9.38, 10.4 & 10.30 et alia.

judge that what they have done is truly good or bad.⁶⁸ Epictetus himself is not fully above judging the morality of other people's actions⁶⁹ but he ultimately advises against concerning oneself with whether an unjust person "deserves" their apparent situation.⁷⁰ He also argues that the only legitimate judge of character is Zeus and that the divine order delivers punishment enough for the vicious by ensuring their misery while they remain vicious.⁷¹ The notion of responsibility employed here is primarily inward facing and forward-thinking. An agent asks herself what she is responsible for not to assign deserts, but to understand what she has done, what is within the scope of her control and, from this, what she is able to do next. This reading is also favoured by Hahm, who argues that both Marcus and Epictetus advise contemplation about your own reactions in the face of divine providence, evaluating impressions, evaluating your evaluations and introspecting.⁷²

This is the purpose of moral responsibility to the Imperial Stoics; considering oneself responsible is done for the purpose of considering one's psychological state. It is fundamentally introspective and more concerned with a future prospect of moral improvement than with guilt over past actions. As for the responsibility of others, the agent is advised against concerning herself with their vice or, to Seneca, her concern with others is merely for their options for moral improvement.

If the Stoic conception of moral responsibility is understood in this way – as introspective, focused on future moral improvement and fundamentally not a matter of condemnation or punishment – then the results of Part 3 no longer seem counterintuitive and unfair. Rather, considering responsibility in terms of a counterfactual opportunity forces the agent to think

⁶⁸ Epictetus, *Discourses*, 1.28.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 3.1, 3.24.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 3.17.

⁷¹ Ibid, 3.11.

⁷² David E. Hahm, "A Neglected Stoic Argument for Human Responsibility" in *Illinois Classical Studies* Vol 17, no. 1 (Spring 1992), 38-9.

towards the future (because possibility statements are, by definition, about the future) and can motivate self-improvement in discouraging complacency.

The therapeutic sentiments discussed above are not widely expressed in earlier sources.⁷³

Neither Epictetus, Seneca nor Marcus Aurelius are known for their orthodoxy. However, the above views are consistent with and, to some extent, corroborated by early Stoic teachings.

b) Motivation from Earlier Accounts

This question of what the early Stoics are able to do with their concept of moral responsibility is touched on by Hankinson, who agrees that Stoic compatibilism does not appear to provide a justification for punishment (at least not punishment-qua-punishment).⁷⁴ However, he argues that the Stoics have the necessary material to explain away this apparent lack of justification - assigning praise and blame is in our nature and our nature is part of the wider nature of the best of all possible worlds.⁷⁵ Hence, assigning praise and blame is in accordance with nature, and thus usually *kathēkon*. I disagree with Hankinson that the Stoic appeal to nature can be used to justify continuing social norms that do not further people's virtue. Zeno himself is alleged to have argued the exact opposite. His (lost) *Politeia* is said to argue that society ought to be radically restructured to better accommodate our natures, dismantling most conventional institutions that are irrelevant to virtue.⁷⁶ The early Stoic position is not one which defends the status quo. Moreover, on this issue in particular, Zeno's *Politeia* is thought to have advocated for the abolition of lawcourt. According to Schofield, Zeno's conception of political justice is one that eschews legal punishment.⁷⁷ Zeno can be read as an anti-retributionist on this basis.

⁷³ Or, if they were, they have been lost.

⁷⁴ Hankinson, "Determinism and Indeterminism", 537.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 538-9.

⁷⁶ DL 7.33, 7.131 and LS 67A, F.

⁷⁷ Malcolm Schofield, "Zeno of Citium's Anti-Utopianism" in *Saving the City: Philosopher-Kings and Other Classical Paradigms* (London: Routledge, 1999) 54.

Zeno's political philosophy is only available through second-hand sources and thus hard to accurately narrow down but it is not the only branch of early Stoicism that supports an introspective and non-punitive model of moral responsibility.⁷⁸ It is a far less controversial aspect of Stoic doctrine that the correct goal to have in life is virtue, which is what ought to motivate.⁷⁹ For moral responsibility to be a motivating concept to a Stoic, it must contribute to achieving that end. It is hard to see how attempting to punish others would help an agent achieve this good.⁸⁰ This is the perspective that inspires Epictetus, who treats dwelling on others' wrongdoing as a distraction from what matters.

What matters is the pursuit of virtue so whatever moral responsibility is used for should be contributing towards that goal. Modal compatibilism is a good fit here due to the consequences discussed in Part 3.b. A conception of moral responsibility that is geared towards future virtue and introspection is completely at home in the Stoic system. Moreover, counterintuitive and even unfair results that hold an agent responsible for that which is not immediately in her control are not a problem if the concept of moral responsibility is not being used to condemn and punish.

⁷⁸ Incidentally, as Epictetus thoroughly disagreed with aspects of Zeno's politics regarding gender and social roles, it is likely that this area of early theory was not what inspired his approach.

⁷⁹ LS, 63A, D.

⁸⁰ Another consideration is the account of *eupatheiai*; the sage – the perfectly virtuous person – experiences “caution” concerning the vice of others in the future, but not in the present or past. (DL 7.116) If the wise person is supposedly so unconcerned over the wrongdoings of others, then it is clear that punishment is not a wise goal.

Conclusion

The primary motivation of this paper was to make the most of what the Stoics have to say about both possibility and compatibilism. While I empathise with Salles' complaint over the apparent superfluity of Chrysippean modality to the account of compatibilism - and I understand Brennan's argument to its lack of immediate convincingness – I have argued that, with a more thorough examination of Stoic modal logic and an embrace of the moralising perspective of the school, modal compatibilism is a worthwhile consideration.

Conceptualising moral responsibility as involving a counterfactual opportunity forces the agent to consider not just her own acts of assent, but the presence and longevity of external hindrances that affect the range of actions available to her, and her inherent nature as a rational being capable of conforming with virtue. Moreover, conceptualising moral responsibility this way complements the wider traditions of the school, especially the anti-retributionist and introspective therapeutic sentiments of the imperial period.

I think it is important to explore lines of enquiry that entail counter-intuitive results when doing so increases our understanding of a topic. I believe thus exploring the counterfactual opportunity enriches our understanding of *kathēkonta*, showing the breadth of moral responsibility and the lack of complacency expected from the school, and demonstrates the holistic nature of the intertwining Stoic system of modal logic, deterministic metaphysics and focus on the inherent ethical nature of humanity.

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**Declaration of Originality of Authorship of a thesis submitted for examination in the MSt in
Ancient Philosophy in the academic year 2019-2020**

I,Eloise Victoria Breen....., affirm that my submitted thesis entitled
..... is my own original work, except
where otherwise stated, and that I have only shown drafts of it to my supervisor, Dr
.....Marion Durand..... (*please fill in*), in approximately four hours of supervision,
and that I have received help in its preparation from Dr/Prof
.....N/A..... (*please list all Oxford Philosophy
Faculty members you received help from and specify the sort of help received, or write "N/A"*).

Signed: 

Date:14/07/2020.....