

Impulse, Value, Good

There are three major sources of early Stoic ethics. (a) Diogenes Laertius VII 84–131, (b) Stobaeus, who in the *Anthology* (II 57–116) probably cites Arius Didymus at length, and (c) Cicero, *On Moral Ends* (*De finibus*, III 16–76). The works by Seneca and Epictetus are insightful later Stoic discussions of practical ethics. Stoic ethics is systematic, and thus inter-connected. Ethics is thus mixed with moral psychology, i.e. human functioning in moral contexts.

- 56BC 1. What do you think are the main parts of ethics, and how do they interact?
- 57A 2. What is the object of an individual's first impulse?
- 57A3B 3.* Why is pleasure not the first impulse?
- 57FG 4. Explain Hierocles' image of the 'many circles' (57G 1).
- 58 5. What is the connection between value and preference or choice?
- 58ABC 6. What are 'indifferent' things (*ἀδιάφορα, adiaphora*)?
- 58 7.* What is the relevance of 'indifferent' things?
- 58, 60 8. Make a list of good things, bad things, and indifferent things.
- 60 9. What is good from a Stoic perspective (see esp. 60G)?
- 60D 5 10.* Some things have value but are not good. Explain.

Background Information. (a) Proper function (*καθῆκον, kathêkon*) is a key notion in Stoic ethics. Roughly, it means actions that are appropriate or consistent with one's nature, and so indicative of 'proper function'. The idea is that impulses have an evaluative and prescriptive aspect or shape. (b) An impulse (*ὁρμή, hormê*) is what makes us do things: the sufficient motivation for intentional actions. Some *impressions* are 'hormetic', i.e. those with prescriptive roles, but desires and passions are impulses too. (c) 57A1 mentions 'appropriation' and 57G6 mentions 'assimilation'. These are terms for *οἰκειώσις (oikeiôsis)*, which is another key idea and roughly means an individual's natural inclination towards something that apparently belongs to it. So, the basic *oikeiôsis* is directed at one's own inner pneumatic constitution (hence self-concern).