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Intentionalism and Deontology in the Early Stoic Ethics

Andrei V. Seregin

Institute of Philosophy, Russian Academy of Sciences,
12/1, ul. Goncharnaya, Moscow, 109240, Russian Federation; avis12@yandex.ru

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In this paper, I demonstrate that the early Stoics adhered to a normative theory that may be called intentionalist: the moral significance of any action is not determined by its material content, but by the virtuous or vicious disposition of the agent's soul and the intentions arising from this disposition. Since according to Stoics all people are divided into virtuous sages and vicious non-sages, all the actions of the former are morally right (κατορθώματα), whereas those of the latter are morally wrong (ἁμαρτήματα), even if they are materially identical. On the other hand, some statements in the Stoic fragments can rather be characterized as deontological: in this case, certain materially defined types of action (stealing, lying, adultery, etc.) seem to be presented as morally wrong in themselves. The paper's central thesis is that such statements do not contradict the basic Stoic intentionalism but can be interpreted as consistent with it. Such an interpretation becomes possible under two conditions: firstly, if one takes into account how exactly the notions of κατόρθωμα and ἁμάρτημα relate to the Stoic notions of appropriate and inappropriate action (καθῆκον and παρὰ τὸ καθῆκον), and, secondly, if one examines the Stoic position on the moral status of lying, which is very revealing in this respect.

Keywords: ancient ethics, deontology, intentionalism, Stoicism.

In this paper, I would like to clarify the exact logical *relationship* between the key notions of the early Stoic ethics — κατόρθωμα (morally right action), ἁμάρτημα (morally wrong action), καθῆκον (appropriate action) and παρὰ τὸ καθῆκον (inappropriate action). What intrigues me the most in examining this topic is that, as I demonstrate in the first part of the paper, the Stoic fragments seem to describe the moral status of human actions in two different ways which *prima facie* are hardly compatible. On the one hand, the early Stoics declare that all the actions by the virtuous sage are morally right (κατορθώματα), whereas all the actions by other people who are essentially non-virtuous are morally wrong (ἁμαρτήματα) even when materially, i. e. in terms of their actual content, these actions happen to be identical. The reason for this is that any activity's moral significance is determined exclusively by whether it is performed out of the virtuous disposition of the soul or not. On the other hand, the same sources seem to be quite unambiguous in qualifying certain materially determined types of actions (such as theft, lying, adultery, etc.) as morally wrong *tout court*. For brevity, I will refer to these two approaches as "intentionalist" and "deontological", respectively. Their simultaneous presence in the Stoic[1] fragments, in my view, constitutes an obvious problem. First of all, what sense can

[1] In what follows, I will not always speak of *early* Stoic ethics, philosophy, etc., but this is what is implied.

there be in expressly singling out, for example, lying as a morally wrong type of action if, according to Stoic intentionalism, an ordinary person commits a ἁμάρτημα even by telling the truth? Secondly, if the logic of the intentionalist approach is to be completely consistent, should it not imply that in principle a virtuous sage can perform a κατόρθωμα even by doing something that would have to be considered a ἁμάρτημα by deontological standards? In the second part of the paper, I try to show that it is possible to find a satisfactory solution to such questions by taking into account how precisely the notions of morally right and wrong actions correlate with the notions of καθῆκον and παρὰ τὸ καθῆκον because these latter concepts presuppose the possibility of what one may call "material inversion", i. e. an action which as a rule is appropriate can sometimes become inappropriate depending on the circumstances, and vice versa. I also pay particular attention to the testimonies concerning the Stoic attitude towards the moral status of lying since they are very revealing for my purposes.[2]

Methodologically, a general observation worth making from the start is that there are different ways of approaching various conceptual discrepancies one can discover in the Stoic fragments. Obviously enough, one can try to explain them in purely historical terms. For one thing, various Stoic thinkers may have held substantially different positions on the same issue, and, for another, their authentic views may have been more or less distorted by those authors from whom we draw our information about them. Of course, I do not deny the general importance of this historical approach and, to a certain extent, resort to it myself. Still, my intention here is rather to offer a "unitarian" reconstruction of the early Stoic position, which is both logically possible and agrees well enough with the sources. In my opinion, it is essential to show that what at first glance looks like a straightforward inconsistency can in principle be resolved.

1

According to various fragments, the early Stoics espouse the view that only virtuous sages are able to perform morally right actions (κατορθώματα)[3] while being completely unable to commit morally wrong ones (ἁμαρτήματα).[4] In contrast, the rest of humankind consists of vicious fools and madmen[5] whose actions are never morally right but always morally wrong whatever they do.[6] Perhaps the most straightforward formulation of this radically dualistic conception is the fragment taken from Stobaeus:

[2] The questions I raise here are closely related to the traditional debate on whether Stoic ethics admitted of exceptionless rules (e. g. Mitsis 1994, 4835–4841; Striker 1996, 219–220) or wholly relied on circumstance dependent moral solutions (e. g. Vander Waerdt 2003; Lorenz 2020, 183–185; Visnjic 2021, 34–51). It is the former of these views that I call here "deontological". However, I am not aware of any work examining *precisely* the same problem that interests me here, i. e. the contradiction between "intentionalist" normative theory and materially determined ἁμαρτήματα. It should be noticed that, although occasionally some scholars do describe Stoic ethics as either "intentionalist" (e. g. Vander Waerdt 2003, 18–20) or "deontological" (e. g. Striker 1996, 220), these terms are not always used in the same conceptual sense as here. E. g. Visnjic 2021 speaks of "Stoicism as deontology" mostly to express his claim — to my mind, erroneous — that the Stoic notion of καθῆκον suggests some idea of specifically *moral* duty.

[3] See SVF III. 13, where it is stated that κατόρθωμα "is the province only of the wise (contingitque sapienti soli)" (transl. Annas *et al.* 2001, 95).

[4] SVF III. 556; 558; 583; 643.

[5] SVF I. 227; III. 657–658; 662; 664–668.

[6] Thus, according to SVF III. 520, bad people (φαῦλοι) are incapable of right action (οὐ… δύνανται κατορθοῦν).

T1 "[**a**] It is the view of Zeno and his Stoic followers that there are two races of men, that of the worthwhile, and that of the worthless (δύο γένη τῶν ἀνθρώπων εἶναι, τὸ μὲν τῶν σπουδαίων, τὸ δὲ τῶν φαύλων). The race of the worthwhile employ the virtues through all their lives, while the race of the worthless employ the vices (καὶ τὸ μὲν τῶν σπουδαίων διὰ παντὸς τοῦ βίου χρῆσθαι ταῖς ἀρεταῖς, τὸ δὲ τῶν φαύλων ταῖς κακίαις). [**b**] Hence (ὅθεν) the worthwhile always do right in everything on which they embark (ἀεὶ κατορθοῦν ἐν ἅπασιν οἷς προστίθεται), and the worthless do wrong (ἁμαρτάνειν). [**c**] The worthwhile man, using his practical experiences with regard to life in things done by him, does all things well (πάντ' εὖ ποιεῖν), just as he does them sensibly, with self-restraint, and in accord with the other virtues (καθάπερ φρονίμως καὶ σωφρόνως καὶ κατὰ τὰς ἄλλας ἀρετάς). The worthless man, conversely, does badly (τὸν δὲ φαῦλον κατὰ τοὐναντίον κακῶς)…" (SVF I. 216 = Stob. *Ecl.* 2. 7. 11g. 11–20 Wachsmuth-Hense; transl. Pomeroy 1999, 73).

It is important that this fragment suggests a specific causal link ([**b**]: ὅθεν) between virtues and vices "employed" by the good and the bad people, respectively ([**a**]), and the fact that the former always do what is morally right (κατορθοῦν), while the latter always act in a morally wrong way (ἁμαρτάνειν) ([**b**]). What is implied here is that κατόρθωμα can be defined as an "activity in accordance with virtue",[7] and ἁμάρτημα — as an "activity in accordance with vice".[8] Virtue and vice in their turn are considered by the Stoics to be the stable states or "dispositions" (διαθέσεις) of the soul.[9] Therefore, in order to be able to commit a morally right or wrong action, the agent must already possess a corresponding state of the soul, which is thought of as the only possible *source* of such activities.[10]

The Stoics also believe that all the virtues are interconnected in such a way that the agent who has one of them necessarily has all the others[11] because they are based on a single moral "knowledge" (ἐπιστήμη)[12] or "prudence" (φρόνησις).[13] Consequently, the same person cannot be virtuous in one respect but vicious in another. On the contrary, any morally right action is performed in accordance with all the virtues at once.[14] A similar logic applies to vices and morally wrong actions.[15] From the Stoic point of view, this entails that if an agent possesses the virtuous state of the soul, then absolutely all her actions become morally right, but if the state of her soul is vicious, all of them become morally wrong.[16]

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7 SVF III. 494: …Κατορθώματα δ' εἶναι τὰ κατ' ἀρετὴν ἐνεργήματα…

8 SVF III. 661: …τοῦ δ' ἁμαρτήματος ὄντος ἐνεργήματος κατὰ κακίαν…

9 SVF I. 199; 202; II. 393; III. 39 (=197); 104–105.

10 E. g. SVF III. 528: "… all wrong acts (πάντα… τὰ ἁμαρτήματα)… naturally come from, as it were, one source, that of vice…(καθάπερ γὰρ ἀπὸ μιᾶς τινος πηγῆς τῆς κακίας φέρεσθαι πέφυκε)" (transl. Pomeroy 1999, 85). Cf. III. 41; 203. The same idea is implied whenever it is stated (SVF II. 132 = **T6**; III. 347 = **T4**; 511; 512; 516 = **T2**) that the sage performs his actions from prudence (ἀπὸ φρονήσεως; cf. n. 13) or some kind of good disposition (ἀπὸ τεχνικῆς διαθέσεως; ἀπὸ ἀρίστης διαθέσεως; ἀπὸ ἕξεως καὶ διαθέσεως εὐλογίστου; ἀπὸ ἀστείας διαθέσεως), while morally wrong actions stem from bad dispositions or states of the soul (ἀπὸ ἀτέχνου [sc. διαθέσεως]; οὐκ ἀφ' ἕξεως καθηκούσης; οὐκ ἀπὸ λογικῆς ἕξεως; ἀπὸ κακῆς διαθέσεως; ἀπὸ μοχθηρᾶς ἕξεως). Cf. also notes 15–16.

11 SVF I. 199–200; II. 349; III. 275; 280; 295–300; 302–303; 305; 310.

12 SVF I. 374; III. 256–257; 260. Cf. III. 262; 264–266; 268–269.

13 SVF I. 200–201; III. 255. Cf. III. 283–284.

14 SVF I. 216 = **T1[c]**; III. 297; 299; 557.

15 Thus, all the vices are interconnected (SVF III. 103; 659; 661) and based on ignorance (ἄγνοια) (SVF III. 95; 256; 262; 265; 663). Hence, any morally wrong action is committed in accordance with all of them at once (SVF III. 560).

16 E. g. SVF III. 661: "…every worthless man does whatever he does in accord with vice, just as the worthwhile man [does whatever he does] in accord with virtue" (πᾶς φαῦλος ὅσα ποιεῖ κατὰ κακίαν ποιεῖ,

This idea is presupposed in those texts where even the most insignificant actions by the sage, which from a conventional point of view may seem morally neutral (e.g. stretching out a finger, walking around, etc.), are presented as κατορθώματα[17] — obviously, because they too are produced by his virtue.

Besides, the Stoics assert that there can be no *intermediate* state of the soul between virtue and vice.[18] In that case, all possible actions of moral agents without exception must be produced either by virtue or by vice and constitute either κατορθώματα or ἁμαρτήματα, respectively. Evidence in favour of this conclusion is provided by the Stoic thesis that, despite some qualitative differences between morally wrong actions,[19] as ἁμαρτήματα or *peccata* they are all equal (ἴσα; *paria*) to each other,[20] and the same is true about morally right actions.[21] While trying to substantiate this claim, the Stoics insist that even a person who makes progress towards moral perfection (προκόπτων) remains no less vicious and miserable than the worst of evildoers since she still lacks the genuine virtue only possessed by the sage.[22] Given that the true sage is as rare as the mythical bird Phoenix or, perhaps, has never existed at all,[23] even the historical figures regarded in antiquity as the embodiment of virtue and wisdom like Aristides or Plato[24] without excepting famous members of the Stoic school itself[25] turn out to be precisely such vicious people.

Logically, one can draw two important conclusions from this conception. First, such an approach cannot afford to admit morally neutral types of actions, which would not become either morally right when done by a sage or morally wrong when done by a non-sage.[26] Secondly, it is natural to suppose that at least in many cases non-sages, especially those striving for virtue, do not commit any specific evildoings that can be opposed to virtuous acts in terms of their content. For the most part[27] they do the same things that a sage would do in their place, and the whole difference between these materially identical acts is that non-sages are unable to perform them out of the virtuous mental disposition. It is precisely this idea that is clearly formulated in SVF III. 516:

καθάπερ ὁ σπουδαῖος κατ᾽ ἀρετήν) (transl. Pomeroy 1999, 85, slightly altered). See also III. 307; 473; 557; 560; 563; 643. Cf. I. 569; III. 504; 558; 561.

17 SVF III. 211; 501. Cf. I. 217; III. 103; 106; 203; 207; 212; 627; 730.

18 SVF I. 566; III. 536. Cf. III. 537.

19 SVF III. 528–529.

20 SVF I. 224; III. 350; 468; 527–529; 531–533. Cf. I. 225; III. 526.

21 SVF II. 1128; III. 528–529; 531. Cf. III. 526. See also in general Cic. *Parad.* 3.

22 SVF III. 527; 530; 532; 534–536; 539.

23 SVF III. 619; 657–658; 668; 32 Diog.

24 SVF III. 535; cf. I. 232.

25 Cf. SVF III. 657; 662; 668.

26 This conclusion may seem to be at variance with the following statement from SVF III. 501: "…some activities (τῶν ἐνεργημάτων) are right acts (κατορθώματα), while others are wrong acts (ἁμαρτήματα), while others are neither (οὐδέτερα)…" (transl. Pomeroy 1999, 69, slightly altered). The examples of these neutral activities mentioned further in the text are as follows: "to talk, to pose a question (ἐρωτᾶν), to answer, to walk around (περιπατεῖν), to live abroad, and things like them" (Ibid.). However, this fragment also states that to walk around prudently (φρονίμως περιπατεῖν) is a κατόρθωμα (cf. n. 17), which presupposes that nonetheless such actions *do* become morally right (*pace* Gourinat 2014, 30–31) when performed "from prudence" (ἀπὸ φρονήσεως; cf. notes 10 and 13). See also SVF III. 106 where "stupid questioning" (ἄφρων ἐρώτησις) is presented as an example of genuine evil. Accordingly, the idea seems to be that particular types of actions can be treated as morally neutral if viewed *in abstracto*, i. e. without reference to the virtuous or vicious disposition of the person who performs them. See Rist 1969, 99–101.

27 Or, possibly, even always, as SVF III. 510 suggests with respect to a non-sage who has *almost* achieved perfection.

T2 "…they say that all people have the same functions (πάντα μὲν κοινὰ εἶναι καὶ πάντων τὰ ἔργα), though it makes a difference whether they are carried out from a craftsmanlike disposition or an uncraftsmanlike one (ἀπὸ τεχνικῆς διαθέσεως ἢ ἀπὸ ἀτέχνου). For taking care of one's parents and otherwise honoring them (τὸ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι γονέων καὶ ἄλλως τιμᾶν γονεῖς) is not the special function of a virtuous man (τοῦ σπουδαίου) but doing so from prudence (ἀπὸ φρονήσεως)[28] is. And just as healing is common to the doctor and the layman but doing so medically is the special function of the craftsman, in the same way, too, honoring one's parents (τὸ μὲν τιμᾶν τοὺς γονεῖς) is common to the virtuous man and the non-virtuous man (κοινὸν τοῦ τε σπουδαίου καὶ μὴ σπουδαίου); but honoring one's parents from prudence (τὸ δὲ ἀπὸ φρονήσεως τιμᾶν τοὺς γονεῖς) is the special function of the wise man (ἴδιον τοῦ σοφοῦ); consequently, he has a craft of life whose special function it is to do each of the things which are done from a virtuous disposition (ἀπὸ ἀρίστης διαθέσεως)" (Sext. Emp. *Math*. 11. 200–201; transl. Inwood *et al.* 2008, 176).[29]

However, from this it must follow that only the sage in taking care of his parents performs a κατόρθωμα for this action results from the virtuous disposition. In contrast, whenever it is a non-sage who takes care of his parents, his action, even if materially identical, is still a ἁμάρτημα, as much as when he neglects or mistreats his parents, because he performs it out of the vicious disposition.[30]

It is this approach that I designate as "intentionalist", although this term is not entirely accurate here since the normative logic behind this Stoic conception is more complex. Strictly speaking, the term "intentionalism" as applied to a specific normative theory presupposes the idea that the moral value of actions is to be determined by whether they are done out of morally right or wrong *intentions* or *volitions*, while the Stoics prefer to speak of virtuous or vicious *dispositions of the soul*. However, firstly, both intentionalism and this variety of "virtue ethics" are similar in that they make problematic the strictly deontological thesis that some types of actions are *always* either morally right or morally wrong because of their material content. Secondly, according to some evidence, the Stoics did incorporate an explicitly intentionalist component into the normative logic characteristic of their ethics, as is quite clear from SVF III. 517:

T3 "[**a**] An action (*actio*) will not be right (*recta*) unless one's intention (*voluntas*) is right, since that is the source of the action. [**b**] The intention will not be right, in its turn, unless the mental disposition (*habitus animi*) is right, since that is the source of the intention. [**c**] Further, the mental disposition will not be optimal (*in optimo*) unless the person has grasped the laws of life as a whole (*nisi totius vitae leges perceperit*), has settled on the judgments needing to be made about each thing — unless he has brought the truth to bear on his situation (*res ad verum redegerit*)" (Sen. *Ep*. 95. 57; transl. Graver *et al.* 2015, 378).

Thus, the rightness of the action is determined precisely by the rightness of the intention behind it ([**a**])[31], but the rightness of the intention, in its turn, depends on the right "mental disposition" (*habitus animi*), i. e. virtue ([**b**]). In that case, it is natural to ask what is the normative standard by which the disposition of the soul itself is to be judged as virtuous or vicious. **T3**[**c**] answers this question by appealing to the Stoic thesis that in order to achieve genuine virtue the agent must adequately grasp the universal nature of

[28] Cf. notes 10, 13, and 26.

[29] See also SVF III. 498; 511–512.

[30] Cf. Brennan 2005, 37.

[31] Cf. SVF I. 579–80; III. 506–507; 509; 518; 533; 670.

things[32] simultaneously presented within the Stoic discourse as universal law,[33] the will of God, "right reason", fate, etc.[34] and then act in systematic conformity with it,[35] which must be both absolutely consistent[36] and cognitively infallible.[37] Accordingly, what I call here Stoic "intentionalism" can, in fact, be more appropriately described as a multi-layered normative theory that combines intentionalism *sensu stricto* with virtue ethics and, finally, with a peculiarly Stoic mix of naturalistic and theistic normative standards.

Alongside this general conception, one can find in the Stoic fragments some mostly disjointed and non-systematic information on which particular types of activity the Stoics treated as κατορθώματα or ἁμαρτήματα. To my mind, they fall rather neatly under four main categories:

1. Abstract types of activity, which generally presuppose that the agent acts in accordance with some virtue or vice but leave it unclear in which concrete and materially defined types of external actions this can be manifested (e. g. "to be prudent" (φρονεῖν) or "to act unjustly" (ἀδικεῖν), etc.).[38]

2. The so-called "good feelings" (εὐπάθειαι)[39] characteristic of the sage (e. g. joy and cheerfulness) and the "passions" (πάθη) experienced by the non-sage (e. g. grieve, fear and desire), both of which represent varieties of specific mental impulses, i. e. types of internal rather than external activity.[40]

3. Fairly insignificant forms of external activity, which may seem neutral from the standpoint of conventional morality but become either morally right or morally wrong if done "prudently" or not, etc.[41]

4. Finally, when it comes to ἁμαρτήματα or *peccata*, our sources also mention some specific and materially defined types of external actions usually regarded as immoral by conventional morality (e. g. stealing, betraying one's country or friends, abusing one's parents, committing adultery, deceiving, etc.).[42]

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[32] SVF III. 68; 200; 282; 326; cf. II. 30.

[33] It is this natural law that prescribes κατορθώματα and prohibits ἁμαρτήματα (SVF II. 1003; III. 315–316; 520; cf. III. 314). See Vander Waerdt 2003, 26–28.

[34] SVF II. 30; 937; 1003; 1024; III. 4; 315–316; 319; 323; 325–326; 332; 337; 339; 360; 613–614.

[35] E. g. SVF III. 4: "…And this very thing constitutes the virtue of the happy man (τὴν τοῦ εὐδαίμονος ἀρετὴν) and the smooth current of life, when all actions promote the harmony of the spirit dwelling in the individual man with the will of him who orders the universe (ὅταν πάντα πράττηται κατὰ τὴν συμφωνίαν τοῦ παρ' ἑκάστῳ δαίμονος πρὸς τὴν τοῦ ὅλου διοικητοῦ βούλησιν)" (transl. Hicks 1925, II, 197). See also SVF III. 282; 314; 335–336; 517. This idea is also implied in the Stoic definition of the highest good (τέλος) as "living in accordance with (ὁμολογουμένως / ἀκολούθως) nature" (SVF I. 179; 552; 555; III. 4–9; 12; 149; 264, 31–36; 280, 20–24; 582). See e. g. Inwood 1985, 106–109, 156–164, 212–214.

[36] Virtue is characterised by internal consistency and stability (SVF I. 179; 202; III. 11; 39; 188; 198–200; 262; 312; 459; 510; 41 Diog.), whereas vice, on the contrary, involves inconsistency and instability (SVF III. 312; 425; 531).

[37] Virtue presupposes that actions resulting from it are performed "infallibly" (SVF III. 280: ἀδιαπτώτως; cf. III. 293) and without any omissions (SVF III. 453; 510; 543). For the idea that the sage is infallible, see SVF I. 53–54; 66; II. 90; 95; III. 112; 213; 542; 548–550; 566.

[38] SVF III. 494; 501; 503.

[39] On this notion, see SVF III. 431–442.

[40] SVF III. 85; 350; 445; 468; 501; 504. For the claim that both "good feelings" and "passions" should be considered as forms of internal *activity*, see Inwood 1985, 99–100; 126–131.

[41] See notes 17 and 26.

[42] E. g. SVF III. 501: "…Wrong acts (ἁμαρτήματα) include [1)] to act stupidly, to show lack of restraint, to act unjustly (τό τε ἀφραίνειν καὶ τὸ ἀκολασταίνειν καὶ τὸ ἀδικεῖν), [2)] to feel pain, to be afraid (τὸ λυπεῖσθαι καὶ τὸ φοβεῖσθαι), [4)] to steal (τὸ κλέπτειν), and, overall, whatever is done contrary to correct

It is this last group of testimonies that seems to reflect deontological ideas hardly reconcilable with the intentionalist theory outlined above. Indeed, the claim that, for instance, abusing one's parents (SVF III. 504: *parentes violare*) is a morally wrong type of action would make more sense when combined with the "symmetrical" assumption that taking care of one's parents and honouring them (cf. **T2**: τὸ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι γονέων καὶ ἄλλως τιμᾶν γονεῖς) is a morally right type of action, which is precisely what is usually implied by conventional morality. However, as we have seen (**T2**), by the standards of Stoic intentionalism such an activity as taking care of one's parents becomes a κατόρθωμα if and only if it is performed out of the virtuous mental disposition and not because of its material content so that in the overwhelming majority of cases[43] it turns out to be a ἁμάρτημα. What is the point then of presenting precisely the abuse of one's parents and other conventionally negative forms of external activity as *the* examples of morally wrong types of actions if even the materially opposite types of actions can be and almost always are morally wrong as well? Theoretically, one could suppose that caring for one's parents, etc. can become *both* a κατόρθωμα *and* a ἁμάρτημα depending on the agent's state of the soul (and, therefore, if taken by itself, i. e. without reference to that state, falls under the category of οὐδέτερα as much as "walking around", "posing a question", etc.[44]), but such actions as abusing one's parents *always* stem from the vicious mental disposition and thus can only constitute ἁμαρτήματα.[45] However, first of all, why would this be the case? This assumption would require some further justification. And, secondly, there is ample evidence in the Stoic tradition that sometimes the sage can perform actions that materially belong to the same types of external activities as those listed in 4) or at least to very similar ones.[46] But this must mean that these ἁμαρτήματα can nonetheless turn into κατορθώματα, that is, result from the virtuous state of the soul.

2

In my view, in order to clarify these issues, it is necessary to examine how the notions of morally right or wrong actions, i. e. κατορθώματα and ἁμαρτήματα, relate to such no-

reason" (transl. Pomeroy 1999, 69). There seems to be no difference between stealing and other types of ἁμαρτήματα. By contrast, this fragment further mentions "neutral actions" (οὐδέτερα) such as "walking around" (περιπατεῖν) which can turn both into κατορθώματα and ἁμαρτήματα (see n. 26). It seems natural to infer that stealing is *not* one of them and thus is *always* morally wrong. See also SVF III. 350; 504; 527; 533. There are also fragments where the terms ἁμάρτημα or *peccatum* are absent, but the context makes it quite clear that the actions in question are typical examples of moral evil (SVF I. 77; III, 85; 106; 347; 421; 473).

[43] Given that true sages are extremely rare, if they ever existed at all. See notes 23–25.

[44] See SVF III. 501 and n. 26.

[45] Cf. SVF III. 347 = **T4** below.

[46] Thus, in fact, the sage can lie (SVF II. 132; 994; III. 513; 554–555; cf. **T5–6** below), enter into incestuous relationships (III. 743), and eat human flesh (Diog. Laert. 7. 121). According to Cic. *Parad*. 3. 24, "sometimes it is possible to take even a parent's life without committing a crime" (et parenti non numquam adimi vita sine scelere potest) (transl. Webb 1985, 24; cf. Cic. *Off*. 3. 90) since it depends on the agent's motives. See in general the so-called "Cynic precepts" (*praecepta Cynica*, as von Arnim labelled them) that treat as permissible incest, affairs with prostitutes, the eating of human corpses, including those of close relatives, etc. (SVF I. 250–257; III. 743–756). Lying and killing one's parents are clearly materially identical to those types of actions that otherwise are considered morally wrong (SVF I. 77; III. 347; 504; 527). On the other hand, some fragments (SVF III. 743; 745) explicitly present incest as in itself "indifferent" (ἀδιάφορον) so that, apparently, it may become both morally right and wrong depending on the agent's intentions. But then one may ask why mere adultery is unequivocally presented as morally wrong (SVF I. 77; III. 85; 350; 421; 533).

tions as καθῆκον (appropriate action) and παρὰ τὸ καθῆκον (inappropriate action). As various sources show, to qualify some action as appropriate or inappropriate is not tantamount to evaluating it morally or considering it as some kind of moral good or evil.[47] In fact, the term καθῆκον may be applied even to the activities of irrational animals and plants.[48] The implication is rather that some actions can be viewed as appropriate or inappropriate in terms of a natural constitution of a given living being.[49] First of all, the Stoics believe that the primary natural impulse of every living creature is that for self-preservation.[50] Accordingly, both this impulse itself and those types of actions in which it is realised constitute καθήκοντα.[51] The general principle behind such actions consists in selecting for oneself the so-called "things in accordance with nature" (τὰ κατὰ φύσιν), which materially coincide with conventional non-moral goods like health, wealth, strength, etc., and avoiding "things contrary to nature" (τὰ παρὰ φύσιν), i.e. conventional non-moral evils like illness, poverty, weakness, etc.[52] Of course, the Stoics themselves deny that all these varieties of non-morally valuable and disvaluable things are genuine goods and evils by insisting that they are "indifferent" (ἀδιάφορα) for human happiness or unhappiness.[53] Nonetheless, they still regard them as being, respectively, "preferred" (προηγμένα) and "dispreferred" (ἀποπροηγμένα) indifferents[54] and possessing either a value (ἀξία) or a disvalue (ἀπαξία)[55] precisely because "preferred" things promote the preservation and full-fledged functioning of individual living beings, whereas "dispreferred" things hinder or frustrate it.[56]

At the same time, since many living beings, including humans, have a *social* nature, the Stoics also admit the existence of other-regarding καθήκοντα,[57] thus suggesting that it is natural for a social living being to strive to preserve other creatures of the same kind and fulfil the ensuing social duties.[58] In particular, it is in this context that one can find within the Stoic fragments the notion of "symmetrically" opposed and materially defined types of actions that are either appropriate (e.g. taking care of parents, brothers, friends, homeland, etc.) or inappropriate (i.e. neglecting parents, brothers, friends, homeland, etc.).[59] Even though this idea does not appear to be reflected in our sources as clearly as in the case of self-regarding καθήκοντα, it seems plausible to suppose that in essence other-regard-

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[47] SVF I. 231; III. 13; 187; 494; 497–498; 510; 516 (= **T2**); 758; 761. Cf. Tsekourakis 1974, 5–8.

[48] SVF I. 230; III. 493–494; cf. Hierocl. *Fr.* p. 53. 2–8 von Arnim; Sen. *Ben.* 1. 2. 5.

[49] SVF I. 189; 230; III. 493–494; cf. III. 132; 264; 491; 497; Hierocl. *Fr.* p. 52. 23–53. 12 von Arnim.

[50] SVF III. 178–184; 345; 498.

[51] SVF III. 188; 498.

[52] SVF III. 181–182; 187; 196; 491; 496–499; 514; 758–759; 19–21 Arch.; cf. III. 123. For the notions of τὰ κατὰ φύσιν and τὰ παρὰ φύσιν, see SVF I. 239; III. 124; 135; 140–143; 155; 188; 191; 195; 499; 759; 763; 766.

[53] SVF I. 185; 190; 359; III. 33; 35; 70; 129; 181; 39 Diog.

[54] SVF I. 192–194; III. 62; 117; 122; 125; 127–129; 133–137; 139; 145; 181; 192.

[55] SVF III. 118; 122; 124; 126–130; 133; 143.

[56] SVF III. 126; 145; 165; 180; 181; 47 Diog.; cf. I. 191; 232.

[57] SVF III. 43; 333; 492; 495; 743; 63 Ant.; cf. III. 27.

[58] SVF II. 724; 728; 1138–1139; III. 38; 179; 282; 340; 342–345; 369; 611; 616; 686; 729; 731; 757.

[59] SVF III. 495: "…Befitting acts (καθήκοντα) are all those which reason prevails with us to do: and this is the case with honouring one's parents, brothers and country, and intercourse with friends (γονεῖς τιμᾶν, ἀδελφούς, πατρίδα, συμπεριφέρεσθαι φίλοις). Unbefitting, or contrary to duty (παρὰ τὸ καθῆκον), are all acts that reason deprecates, e.g. to neglect one's parents, to be indifferent to one's brothers, not to agree with friends, to disregard the interests of one's country, and so forth (γονέων ἀμελεῖν, ἀδελφῶν ἀφροντιστεῖν, φίλοις μὴ συνδιατίθεσθαι, πατρίδα ὑπερορᾶν καὶ τὰ παραπλήσια)…" (transl. Hicks 1925, 215).

ing καθήκοντα also imply the same principle of selecting "preferred" things and avoiding "dispreferred" ones although no longer for the agent herself but rather for other agents of the same nature.[60] Certainly, it is quite conceivable that in some cases a conflict may arise between a self-regarding and an other-regarding course of action. Actually, several testimonies show that in the Stoic tradition there was an active debate as to which of them was preferable in such situations.[61]

What is more important for my purposes here is rather the fact that the Stoic notions of "appropriate" and "inappropriate" allow for some sort of radical *material inversion*. In other words, although, as a rule, the material content of the actions falling under these notions is as described above, under specific circumstances it may turn into its exact opposite. For instance, if usually appropriate actions involve contributing to one's self-preservation and selecting "preferred" things for oneself, in some peculiar cases they may consist in selecting what is "dispreferred" and, maybe, even killing oneself. Here I will refer to such appropriate actions as *circumstantial*.[62] Perhaps, at least partly, the logic that stands behind the idea of a circumstantially appropriate action may be based on the realisation that sometimes to embrace what is "dispreferred" is the only way to maximise "preferred" indifferents indirectly[63] (e.g. it may be worthwhile to prefer illness to health if there is no other way to avoid serving a cruel tyrant, since being on his service may predictably lead to one's complete undoing[64]). As to suicide, it appears to become circumstantially appropriate whenever it can be construed as the way to minimise the *inevitable* predominance of "dispreferred" things within an individual existence.[65] A similar logic can be assumed with respect to other-regarding καθήκοντα. For instance, normally the appropriate thing to do is to take care of one's parents and therefore, apparently, to multiply the "preferred" and reduce the "dispreferred" things for them, but sometimes even killing one's parents may become circumstantially appropriate because it may either save them from the inevitable prevalence of the "dispreferred" indifferents in their life or protect the whole society from the same "dispreferred" indifferents that would predictably increase as the result of their actions (e.g. if one's father aspires to tyrannical power).[66]

Now, the question that interests me here is how these ideas agree with the intentionalist normative theory outlined above and especially with the notions of κατόρθωμα and ἁμάρτημα. What seems to be clear from the sources is that any κατόρθωμα or morally right action should be defined as a καθῆκον which has become perfect (τέλειον) precisely because it is an action performed out of virtue; in contrast, other καθήκοντα lacking this qualification are described as "intermediate" or "indifferent" (μέσα).[67] From this logically

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[60] For the critical discussion of this possibility, see Barney 2003, 326–330. Cf. e. g. Irwin 1998, 234; Brennan 2005, 214–215.

[61] Cic. Off. 3. 50–55 = SVF III. 49 Diog.; 61 Ant.; Cic. *Off*. 3. 89–91; Anon. *in Tht*. 6. 17–29 Diels-Schubart. Cf. SVF III. 333; 689; Cic. *Off*. 3. 20–22.

[62] The corresponding Greek term καθήκοντα περιστατικά or κατὰ περίστασιν is only used in SVF III. 496 (= Diog. Laert. 7. 109; cf. 7. 121), but the general idea is present e. g. in SVF III. 191; 496; 757–759; 763; 766–768.

[63] Cf. Forschner 1981, 193, 200; Gourinat 2014, 29.

[64] SVF I. 361 Arist. Although this example is taken from a fragment of Aristo of Chios (see Ioppolo 1980, 153–154, 181–182), I believe that *mutatis mutandis* it may prove quite relevant within the framework of the orthodox Stoicism (cf. Vander Waerdt 2003, 29).

[65] SVF III. 691; 757–759; 763; 768.

[66] Cf. Cic. *Parad*. 3. 24; Cic. *Off*. 3. 90 and Rist 1969, 81–82; Brennan 2005, 212–213.

[67] SVF III. 13; 494; 498–499; 500; cf. III. 510; 521–522; Cic. *Off*. 1. 8; 3. 14.

follows that any action by the sage is some kind of καθῆκον so that it is impossible for him to do anything which is παρὰ τὸ καθῆκον.[68] This, of course, implies that all the inappropriate actions are morally wrong (ἁμαρτήματα)[69] since they can never be done from the virtuous disposition.[70] The problem is how to construe the notion of "intermediate" appropriate actions. One possible interpretation would be to assume that μέσα καθήκοντα are common both for sages and non-sages in the sense that these actions always remain morally neutral regardless of whoever performs them, i.e. they do not become either "perfect" when done by a sage or morally wrong when done by a non-sage.[71] This view has at least two important implications: first, it is only an inappropriate action that can be a ἁμάρτημα, and, second, "intermediate" appropriate actions must be materially distinguishable from κατορθώματα. Obviously, such a conception would be incompatible with basic Stoic intentionalism because it would imply that the agent's virtuous or vicious disposition is of no consequence for the moral status of "intermediate" actions. Besides, it is not easy to understand what would be the specific material content of morally right actions as opposed to "intermediate" ones since the former appear to borrow this content from the latter.[72] Accordingly, the only interpretation that is logically compatible with Stoic intentionalism must go as follows: the sage can only perform appropriate actions, and all these actions are κατορθώματα, whereas the non-sage can perform both appropriate and inappropriate actions, and all these actions are ἁμαρτήματα.[73] But if appropriate actions are always either morally right or morally wrong, then why do the Stoics call them "intermediate"? To my mind, the point of using this term may be precisely to stress that such actions can become *both* morally right and wrong depending on the agent's disposition and therefore in themselves have no moral value at all.[74] However, it is essential to keep in mind that appropriate and inappropriate actions may, so to say, switch places

68 SVF III. 649.

69 SVF III. 499; cf. III. 500.

70 But only for *this* reason and not because παρὰ τὸ καθῆκον *by itself* constitutes moral evil. This is why, in my view, when Cicero speaks of intermediate *inappropriate* actions (SVF I. 231 = Acad. 1. 37: *contra officium media*; *officia praetermissa media*), he is not necessarily mistaken (*pace* Rist 1969, 97; cf. Tsekourakis 1974, 16).

71 Cf. Tsekourakis 1974, 9–11; Gourinat 2014, 18–20. There is some evidence that can be interpreted in this way. Perhaps the clearest examples are two fragments taken from Philo (SVF III. 363 = *Prob.* 60–61; SVF III. 519 = *Leg.* 1. 93) where he heavily relies on Stoic terminology but does not explicitly ascribe such views to the Stoics themselves. Rather, these passages reflect his peculiar usage of the terms in question, which is known to significantly diverge from the authentically Stoic one (see Wolfson 1948, II, 268–279; Roskam 2005, 205–208). The same can be said about SVF III. 515 (= Clem. *Str.* 6. 14. 111. 3), which rather obviously uses Stoic concepts for specifically Christian purposes. Finally, the evidence taken from Cicero (SVF I. 231 = *Acad.* 1. 37; III. 498 = *Fin.* 3. 58–59), to my mind, is far from being decisive. In fact, despite possible misconceptions on the part of Cicero (cf. n. 70), some of his statements may support the alternative approach I defend here (see n. 72).

72 Thus, according to SVF III. 498 (= Cic. *Fin.* 3. 58–59; cf. SVF III. 513; Sen. *Ben.* 4. 10, 1–2), returning a deposit (*depositum reddere*) is an appropriate action (*officium*), but when one does it "justly" (*iuste*), i. e. exercising such a virtue as justice, it becomes morally right (*recte factum*). Cf. **T2**, **T6** and notes 10, 17, 26. See also Forschner 1981, 197–198.

73 This is why Visnjic 2021, 55 misses the point when he tries to downplay the idea that "all the actions of the non-sage are vicious actions and errors" because, in his opinion, "under such a view, a normal person can never hope to perform a *kathêkon*". Of course, she can, but this καθῆκον would still be a vicious action (cf. Rist 1969, 98–99, 101; Tsekourakis 1974, 13; Forschner 1981, 199, 201; Vander Waerdt 2003, 26; Roskam 2005, 206; Brennan 2005, 189). Cf. Sen. *Ep.* 95. 43.

74 Cf. Rist 1969, 100–101.

under special circumstances. Accordingly, sometimes it is perfectly possible for a sage to commit a deed that in most cases would count as inappropriate because in this particular case it proves to be circumstantially appropriate. Of course, as everything the sage does, this action is done from the virtuous disposition and, consequently, should be recognised as a κατόρθωμα.

It makes sense to offer a more detailed reconstruction of the logical implications entailed by this interpretation. For instance, with respect to self-regarding καθήκοντα **I)** to contribute to one's own self-preservation (e. g. by taking care of one's health, etc.) is usually an appropriate action, whereas to kill oneself is usually an inappropriate one. In this case, **a)** whenever a non-sage acts so as to preserve himself, he does what is appropriate (καθῆκον) but still commits a ἁμάρτημα since his action does not result from virtuous motivation. In particular, he is likely to behave this way because he mistakes "preferred" and "dispreferred" indifferents, including life and death, for genuine goods and evils, which is tantamount[75] to experiencing morally evil[76] "passions" (πάθη). On the other hand, **b)** he may ruin his health and even life itself by striving after sensual pleasures or power, etc. — once again, because he erroneously believes that they constitute genuine goods. Therefore, the resultant behaviour becomes both inappropriate (παρὰ τὸ καθῆκον) and morally wrong (ἁμάρτημα). In contrast, **c)** the sage would only do what is appropriate (καθῆκον) in such situations, i.e. he would contribute to his self-preservation, but his motives would be virtuous for he would try to select "preferred" and avoid "dispreferred" indifferents not because he mistakes them for genuine goods and evils but on the sole ground that this is, in his view, the most rational thing to do since it is this action that conforms to the will of God or universal nature. Thus, his action would become "perfectly" appropriate (τέλειον καθῆκον) and morally right (κατόρθωμα).

However, **II)** under special circumstances even killing oneself is circumstantially appropriate, but trying to preserve oneself is circumstantially inappropriate. In such situations, **a)** whenever a non-sage kills himself, he does what is circumstantially appropriate (καθῆκον περιστατικόν) but commits a ἁμάρτημα for his motivation is still not virtuous. In particular, he presumably considers the overwhelming and inevitable prevalence of "dispreferred" indifferents in his life to be escaped by suicide as a genuine evil[77]. On the other hand, **b)** he may refrain from suicide out of fear because he regards death as a genuine evil. This behaviour would be both circumstantially inappropriate (παρὰ τὸ καθῆκον περιστατικόν) and morally wrong (ἁμάρτημα). In contrast, **c)** the sage would only do what is circumstantially appropriate (καθῆκον περιστατικόν) under these peculiar circumstances, i. e. he would kill himself, but he would commit this suicide out of virtuous motivation because his intention in so doing would be to conform to what is at the moment the presumable will of universal nature. Therefore, his suicide would constitute a "perfect" circumstantially appropriate act (τέλειον καθῆκον περιστατικόν), which is morally right (κατόρθωμα).

Similarly, when it comes to other-regarding καθήκοντα, **III)** to take care of one's parents (e. g. by providing for their needs, etc.) is usually an appropriate act, whereas to kill

[75] SVF I. 212; III. 378; 385–387; 391; 393–394; 456; 463; 468; 480–481.

[76] SVF III. 103; 106; 113; 213; 416; 435. Cf. n. 40.

[77] Notice that on this interpretation there is no need to believe that only a sage can perform καθήκοντα περιστατικά (*pace* Tsekourakis 1974, 35 and Ioppolo 1980, 202; cf. Forschner 1981, 193, Anm. 57; 199, Anm. 94).

them is usually an inappropriate one. In this case, **a)** whenever a non-sage takes due care of his parents, he does what is appropriate (καθῆκον), but his action is morally wrong (ἁμάρτημα) for it cannot be performed out of virtuous motivation. For example, he may do this because he hopes to inherit their fortune, which he erroneously regards as a genuine good for himself.[78] Or he may be sincerely driven by compassion, i. e. one of the morally evil "passions",[79] because he mistakes "preferred" and "dispreferred" indifferents for genuine goods and evils affecting his parents' well-being. On the other hand, **b)** he also may kill his parents out of the same desire to take possession of their fortune, which seems to him a genuine good. Such an action would be both inappropriate (παρὰ τὸ καθῆκον) and morally wrong (ἁμάρτημα). As to the sage, **c)** he would only do what is appropriate (καθῆκον) in such situations, i. e. he would duly take care of his parents, but his motives would be virtuous for he would try to multiply "preferred" and reduce "dispreferred" indifferents in their life for the sole reason that, most likely, it is this activity that agrees with the will of universal nature. Because of this motivation, his action would be "perfectly" appropriate (τέλειον καθῆκον) and morally right (κατόρθωμα).

However, **IV)** under special circumstances even killing one's parents is circumstantially appropriate, whereas all the usual ways to take care of them become circumstantially inappropriate. In such situations, **a)** if a non-sage kills his parents, he does what is circumstantially appropriate (καθῆκον περιστατικόν), but still commits a ἁμάρτημα for the lack of virtuous motivation. For one thing, he may erroneously believe that the overwhelming and inevitable prevalence of "dispreferred" indifferents in their life, which makes such a killing circumstantially appropriate, constitutes a genuine evil for them. Or he may still act out of the desire to inherit their fortune, which seems to him a genuine good (e. g. if his parents are rich but suffer from such a terrible and painful illness that their wealth can neither outweigh nor alleviate it). On the other hand, **b)** he may refuse to kill them out of compassion or affection because he regards death as a genuine evil for them. This kind of behaviour would be both circumstantially inappropriate (παρὰ τὸ καθῆκον περιστατικόν) and morally wrong (ἁμάρτημα). In contrast, **c)** the sage once again would only do what is circumstantially appropriate (καθῆκον περιστατικόν) under these exceptional circumstances, i. e. he would kill his parents. Of course, he would do it out of virtuous motivation, i. e. taking into consideration that such is at the moment the will of God or universal nature. Therefore his action would become a "perfect" circumstantially appropriate act (τέλειον καθῆκον περιστατικόν), which is morally right (κατόρθωμα).

Clearly, this interpretation rules out the strict deontological view that some types of actions are *always* either morally good or morally evil by virtue of their material content. On the other hand, it is not the case that the Stoics are intentionalists in the sense that the sage is completely free to choose *any* course of action under *any* circumstances arbitrarily because the virtuous disposition of his soul directly guarantees that whatever he does remains morally right. Rather he can only do what is morally right by unerringly and, of course, virtuously choosing what is *non-morally* appropriate under the circumstances. And it is crucial that, *for the most part*, those actions are appropriate that materially meet the requirements of conventional morality (e. g. telling the truth, taking care of one's parents, protecting one's homeland, etc.). It is only comparatively *rarely* that the opposite actions become circumstantially appropriate, and it is only because this kind of

78 Cf. Sen. *Ep*. 95. 43.

79 SVF I. 434; III, 412–416; 450–453; 640–641.

material inversion is possible at the *non-moral* level that such actions may be transformed into κατορθώματα when performed by the sage. Thus, Stoic intentionalism seems to be compatible with what I would describe as a *moderately* deontological view distinguishing between those actions that as a rule *can* become morally right (although sometimes they cannot) and those that as a rule *cannot* become morally right (although sometimes they can). Accordingly, if some sources present lying, mistreating one's parents, betraying one's country, etc. as ἁμαρτήματα, the implication must be rather that these are the typical examples of those actions that are *for the most part* inappropriate and, consequently, *usually* cannot even become morally right because the sage who infallibly determines what is appropriate *as a rule* will not choose them. Still, it remains the case that under exceptional circumstances it is possible for the materially identical actions to become circumstantially appropriate, and then they also *can* become morally right if done out of virtuous motivation. And, of course, both appropriate and inappropriate acts of any kind whatsoever, i. e. including circumstantial ones, are always morally wrong when performed by a non-sage who lacks genuine virtue.

Perhaps this interpretation may appear a bit farfetched since our evidence unambiguously describes all such conventionally "negative" types of actions as ἁμαρτήματα without making any explicit reservations. But this seems to be the only way to logically reconcile seemingly deontological statements from our sources with basic Stoic intentionalism. Moreover, this interpretation may be corroborated by the texts that reveal a general Stoic attitude towards the moral status of lying, although the evidence they offer does not look very consistent at first glance. According to Proclus' testimony (**T4**), the Stoics regard lying or "deceiving" (ἐξαπατᾶν) as one of the unequivocally immoral types of activity ([**a**]), thus definitely rejecting the view that by itself it may be deemed "intermediate" or "indifferent" ([**c**]), although, curiously enough, they provide this strictly deontological statement with manifestly intentionalist rationale ([**b**]):

> **T4** "[**a**] The Stoics forthwith condemn all such actions[80] as vicious (μοχθηρὰ): according to them it is possible neither to deceive (ἐξαπατᾶν) nor constrain (βιάζεσθαι) nor deprive (ἀποστερεῖν) with justice (δικαίως), [**b**] but each of these activities proceeds from a vicious disposition (ἀπὸ μοχθηρᾶς… ἕξεως) and is unjust (ἄδικός). [**c**] But the ancients posit all such actions as indifferent (μέσα) and capable of opposites, and if performed in one manner as just, in another manner as unjust" (Procl. *in Alc*. 215. 15 — 216. 1 Westerink = SVF III. 347; transl. O'Neill 1971, 242 with minor changes).

However, as the remaining bulk of evidence clearly shows, this depiction of the Stoic stance towards lying cannot be entirely correct, at least if taken at face value.[81] For example, according to SVF III. 554:

> **T5** "[**a**] It is said that the wise man does not lie, but tells the truth in all cases (μὴ ψεύδεσθαι τὸν σοφόν, ἀλλ' ἐν πᾶσιν ἀληθεύειν). [**b**] For lying (τὸ ψεύδεσθαι) does not occur in telling a falsehood (ἐν τῷ λέγειν τι ψεῦδος), but in telling a falsehood in a false way (διαψευστ<ικ>ῶς) and for the deception of one's neighbours (ἐπὶ ἀπάτῃ τῶν πλησίον). [**c**] However they believe that he will sometimes avail himself of the falsehood (Τῷ μέντοι ψεύδει ποτὲ συγχρήσεσθαι νομίζουσιν αὐτὸν) in numerous ways without assent (ἄνευ συγκαταθέσεως): in accord with

[80] I. e. "deceiving", "constraining", and "depriving" discussed below. These are the types of actions mentioned in Pl. *Alc*. 1. 109b1–2, which is a part of the text Proclus comments on here.

[81] Cf. Segonds 1986, II, 408, n. 4.

generalship against the opponents (κατὰ στρατηγίαν <κατὰ> τῶν ἀντιπάλων), and in accord with his foresight of what is useful (κατὰ τὴν τοῦ συμφέροντος προόρασιν), and in accord with many other types of management of life (κατ᾽ ἄλλας οἰκονομίας τοῦ βίου πολλάς)" (Stob. *Ecl*. 2. 7. 11m. 94–101 Wachsmuth-Hense; transl. Pomeroy 1999, 93–95).

The idea that the sage never lies (**T5[a]**) seems to be in line with what is said in **T4**. Indeed, if deceiving others is always a morally wrong action resulting from the vicious disposition of the soul, the sage is supposed never to commit such a deed. Nonetheless, from **T5[c]** it is obvious that the sage *does* lie under certain circumstances. This is confirmed by several other fragments where it is stated that sometimes lying is both justified and acceptable for the sage, e. g. if it helps defend one's homeland during the war or prevent a murder or make somebody undergo necessary medical treatment.[82] It seems plausible to interpret these examples of justified lying according to the logic that stands behind the notion of other-regarding circumstantially appropriate actions. Arguably, telling a lie in these situations contributes to an increase of "preferred" and a decrease of "dispreferred" indifferents for the sage's community, thus becoming an appropriate action he cannot fail to choose.[83] However, reconciling these ideas with the thesis that the sage never lies is only possible by resorting to what *prima facie* almost looks like a verbal trick (**T5[b]**): the actions in question simply should not be *called* "lying" (τὸ ψεύδεσθαι) notwithstanding their being materially identical to it since they still involve "telling a falsehood" (λέγειν τι ψεῦδος). In trying to substantiate this claim, the Stoics are eager to stress that, on the one hand, whenever the sage tells a falsehood, he gives no assent to it,[84] i. e. does not really believe its content to be true, and, on the other, those who do fall for this falsehood are only to blame themselves since in the last analysis their delusion is caused by their having assented to what is false, i. e. their own ignorance and lack of wisdom.[85] But this explanation does not seem very convincing. Indeed, when a non-sage really "lies", he also does not believe what he says to be true, and if others believe him, this still may be ascribed to their own lack of perfect wisdom. Perhaps what is more important is that whenever the sage tells a falsehood, he does it out of the virtuous disposition of the soul, and it is for this reason that his action should not count as "lying". Thus, according to Sextus Empiricus' testimony,

T6 "[**a**] [the wise person] never lies, even if he speaks a falsehood (οὔποτε ψεύδεται, κἂν ψεῦδος λέγῃ), owing to the fact that it is uttered not from a bad but from a noble disposition (μὴ ἀπὸ κακῆς ἀλλ᾽ ἀπὸ ἀστείας… διαθέσεως)… [**b**] the wise person… — that is, the person who has knowledge of what is true — will sometimes speak a falsehood, but will never lie (ἐρεῖ μέν ποτε ψεῦδος, ψεύσεται δὲ οὐδέποτε), because of not having a mindset (τὴν γνώμην) that assents to what is false. [**c**] For, they say, one can learn that the liar is to be judged from his disposition (ἀπὸ τῆς διαθέσεως), and not from the simple utterance, by means of the examples that are about to be offered. Someone is called a grave-digger both when he does this with the goal of stripping the corpses and when he digs graves for the corpses. But the

[82] SVF II. 994; III. 513; 555. See also Sext. Emp. *Math*. 7. 43–44.

[83] For similar reasons, the sage may start an incestual relationship with his daughter if this is the only way to save humankind from extinction (SVF III. 743), i. e. to contribute to preserving the beings whose nature is akin to him. Such an action, too, would constitute an other-regarding circumstantially appropriate act.

[84] SVF II. 132; T5[c]; T6[b].

[85] SVF II. 994.

first person is punished as doing this from a bad disposition (ἀπὸ κακῆς διαθέσεως), while the second actually gets payment for his service for the opposite reason. It is clear, therefore, that speaking a falsehood (τὸ ψεῦδος λέγειν) indeed differs a great deal from lying (τοῦ ψεύδεσθαι), in that the one comes about from a noble mindset (ἀπὸ ἀστείας… γνώμης), but lying (τὸ δὲ ψεύδεσθαι) comes about from a bad one (ἀπὸ πονηρᾶς)" (Sext. Emp. *Math*. 7. 42–45 = SVF II. 132; transl. Bett 2005, 10–11, slightly altered).

Here once again, we find the idea that the sage never lies (**T6[a-b]**, cf. **T5[a]**), which is in perfect agreement with the statement that lying is always a morally wrong act (**T4**). On the other hand, this fragment also makes clear that, in fact, the sage *does* tell falsehoods (**T6[a-b]**, cf. **T5[c]**), and the explanation of the difference between really "lying" and simply "telling a falsehood" is explicitly intentionalist: it is only when someone deceives others "from a bad disposition" or "mindset", that he really "lies", whereas if the materially identical action is done "from a noble disposition" or "mindset", then this is a case of "telling a falsehood" in a justified and morally acceptable way (**T6[a, c]**). One does not even have to admit that this testimony contradicts **T4[b]**, where deception is presented as necessarily immoral, since one cannot completely rule out that this last passage only has in view the morally reprehensible "lying" out of vicious motivation. The conclusion seems to be that "lying" is always a morally wrong action (**T4)** which cannot be ever committed by the sage (**T5[a]**, **T6[a-b]**), and this sounds like a strictly deontological thesis, although in fact it is perfectly possible for the sage sometimes to perform a materially identical action, i. e. to tell what is untrue in order to deceive others (**T5[c]**, **T6[a-b]**), but this should not be *called* "lying" since it happens under the circumstances when such an action becomes circumstantially appropriate and, if done out of virtuous motivation, morally right. Although this position pays some lip service to the deontological approach, it seems clear that its real essence is completely intentionalist. It is this logic that, in my view, can be applied to all the seemingly deontological statements in the sources that present some materially defined types of actions as unambiguous ἁμαρτήματα.

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