of an unsound house. What better illustration could there be of the fact that Stoic ethics does not dictate determinate actions to moral agents, but rather prescribes methods of procedure within a framework of sound general principles?

Cicero, of course, does settle the debate for himself by using the rule of procedure outlined in 3.20–2 to settle the question about the boundary between concealing and merely remaining silent.[81] What seems to be typical of Stoic practice in this case is the use of general principles in a kind of moral casuistry. The rule of procedure just considered is such a principle, and it (like the *formula* and *regula* found in Seneca) seems to form a bridge between the most abstract principles of Stoic ethics (such as statements of the goal, or the claim that men are naturally social, or the assertion that virtue is sufficient for happiness) or physics and concrete decisions to act. Such debates were clearly far from unusual in Stoic ethics. Hecaton is said to have filled book 6 of his treatise on appropriate actions with cases of the sort discussed by Cicero here (3.88–9), and the debates between Antipater and Diogenes of Babylon on such cases are also of this type. What we can derive from this book for our general consideration of Stoic moral reasoning is twofold: its general structure (problem cases settled in the light of a general principle—seen also in the Seneca) and the character of the *formula* chosen. What we do not get is any sign of rule–case deduction, nor any moral principles which are simultaneously (i) imperatival, (ii) universal, and (iii) substantive. In its place we find a more dialectical and rhetorical style of reasoning, one as characteristic of the deliberative and forensic spheres as it is of the philosophical schools.

The kind of discussion which we see reflected in Cicero's discussion is in important ways typical of Stoic moral reasoning. It deals with indifferents primarily, but always within the context of a general moral theory founded on a definite conception of a virtuous life. Stoic moral reasoning deals with concrete decisions about things which are not in themselves of moral value, but which do matter for a normal and 'natural' human

[81] *Off.* 3.57.

life. The issues are genuinely open to debate about what one should do—we are not being asked to decide whether to follow the path of virtue or not. Such decisions are described as 'selections'; and the open-ended nature of 'selection' is to be taken seriously. In no useful sense does Stoic moral theory tell the agent what is to be done in a concrete case.

Rather, it defines the framework and sets the terms within which such a choice is to occur. A successful selection will be one which constitutes an appropriate action, an action which has a reasonable justification, an act for which an adequate, though not certain, defence could be given in some idealized court of 'law', where one need not demonstrate the ultimate moral rightness of the act in order to win one's case. The framework of the moral theory, including the axiology, the general principles, the conception of the *telos* and the virtues, and the naturalistic foundations of the system, will help to determine which selections are reasonably justified—that is, which actions represent the successful functioning of human reason in a concrete situation.

Another important category of factors to consider in selecting the right action and in giving a reasonable justification of one's selection will be the individual identity and character of the agent and the particular relationships in which she finds herself.[82] Stoic ethics lays down general principles which apply to all persons, but it would be a strange agent-centred ethical theory which did not in its theory of moral reasoning provide for the relevance of the particularities of each agent. The *persona* theory first reported for Panaetius (*Off.* 1.107 ff.)[83] is used in exactly this way, but there is no reason to conclude that he is the inventor of the theory.[84] Moreover, the use of a range of different

[82] Let me note here that Ilsetraut Hadot (*Seneca*, ch. 2, esp. pp. 27–8, 32–4) seems to underestimate the Stoic interest in individual character and personality. That our essentially human nature should constrain the ideal behaviour for individuals and that individual variation is not a primary *goal* does not entail that a single and essential norm for human behaviour is all that Stoic practical ethics aimed at.

[83] See too C. Gill, 'Personhood and Personality: The Four-*personae* Theory in Cicero, *De Officiis* I', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 6 (1988), 169–99.

[84] Several considerations ought to incline us to the view that (at least informally) the individual character and situation of the agent were held to be relevant from the