



**THE STOIC
PHILOSOPHER**

Self-Leadership and the Irrationality Dilemma

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Stoicism and Modern Psychology

Despite the considerable age of the philosophical system, much of the Stoic model of the human mind aligns with theories accepted by contemporary psychology. In fact, some of the most influential therapeutic approaches in use today—Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and offshoots like Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy—are based on and remain largely in agreement with Stoic teachings and practices (Robertson, 2018). For those familiar with Stoic thought and, in particular, with the practical motivations underpinning it, the utility of this philosophy in therapeutic and clinical settings should be unsurprising. To acknowledge these successes, however, is not to suggest that Stoicism and contemporary psychology enjoy perfect alignment. Quite to the contrary, there is a central belief of Stoicism that seems to stand at odds with much of what modern scientific literature suggests about the human mind.

(Ir)rationality

Stoicism holds that, at their core, humans are rational beings. "...if something is a man, then that thing is a rational animal," (Sellars qtd Chrysippus, 2006, p. 85). It further argues that, since rationality is a defining characteristic of humanity, behaving rationally is our moral responsibility. Since we are uniquely capable of rationality, the argument goes, that rationality is central to our teleological path—the one we are intrinsically drawn to follow. Rationality characterizes us just as blooming does a flower. Provided the environment is supportive enough, a flower can be reasonably relied on to bloom. Likewise, given a supportive enough environment, humans gravitate towards rationality. Our teleological capacity is greater than that of a flower, though, since we enjoy the autonomy to choose rationality regardless of external realities. And yet, we so often fail to do so.

While the Stoic account seems theoretically plausible, it is at odds with much of the empirical evidence being produced by modern psychology. In particular, researchers like Ariely (2010) and Kahneman (2013) have made celebrated careers out of demonstrating that humans not only behave irrationally, but often do so in predictable ways. We regularly make choices that do not serve us or those we care about. We defend our position more vociferously the less well-founded it appears to be. We follow the crowd even when it is headed straight for an obvious cliff.



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It is necessary, at this point, to establish that the Stoic position on human rationality is not that we are unerringly rational but, rather, that we are essentially so. They claim rationality is the essence of humanity because it is what distinguishes us from other forms of life. But, this is not meant to suggest that all people behave rationally all of the time. Much of our rational capacity depends upon the degree to which we are actively engaged with the present moment. The core Stoic practice of *prosoche* is an admixture of mindfulness and rationality. Without the former, it is too easy to find oneself wrapped up in a story, disconnected from reality and, thus, unable to make a rational decision. Over time and with dedicated practice, proper attention and rationality come to characterize us. That is, they become ever more influential aspects of our character. This is the endless path of Stoic development—the following of our *telos*.

The Irrationality Dilemma

Contrary to the Stoic characterization of humans as essentially rational creatures whose irrational choices are mere stumbles attributable to inattention or insufficient development of character, the portrait painted by mainstream psychology is that of a thoroughly emotional creature disguising itself behind a veneer of rationality. Haidt (2006) uses the analogy of an elephant and rider—a relationship wherein the rider’s control extends only as far as the elephant permits, and when that control is revoked, the rider’s only recourse is to hold on for the ride and apologize for the damage inflicted. Similarly, Robson (2021) offers the analogy of an unreasonable client and the lawyer whose job it is to rationalize, cover up, and excuse their many misdeeds. According to these researchers, we are no more rational in our motivations than any other apes, and what rational capacity we do possess evolved, not to guide us, but to disguise our true nature so that we might get along in the company of other highly intelligent apes. Rationality, in their view, does not help us choose well, it only helps us rationalize effectively. It provides us with persuasive reasons to follow the call of our emotions. It manufactures plausible, seemingly reasonable explanations for choices whose true motivations could be problematic if made apparent.

Clearly, this picture is a problem for Stoicism both in its seeming incompatibility and in its supporting base of research. The likely reaction of those with knowledge of both depictions, even if they are attracted to Stoicism, would be to label its worldview idealistic. They might reach a position of compromise according to which we would be well-served by striving to behave rationally, but that striving will always be at odds with our innate irrationality.

From the perspective of the Stoic philosophical system, this is not an acceptable compromise. If the task of behaving rationally is Sisyphean in nature, with the gravitational pull of our irrational core acting as a constant threat, the Stoic ethical system—the central tenet of which is ‘act according to nature’—becomes untenable. This tenet would either be instructing us to behave irrationally, which is clearly contrary to Stoic teachings, or it would be asking that we reject our actual nature in favor of an idealized one. The problem with this second interpretation is twofold.

First, it raises the question of why the core ethical tenet of Stoicism, repeated *ad nauseum* throughout its foundational texts, would be so misleading. If the central ethical principle was actually ‘act in accordance with what your nature would ideally be’, we must assume that is what the Stoics would have said.



The second problem with the ‘nature actually means ideal nature’ interpretation is how unrealistic it is. Granted, Stoic ethics are strident. They do not recognize ethical gradients, classifying any given choice as either ethical or unethical and similarly refusing to distinguish between more or less unethical acts. This conception is workable, though, precisely because what is ethical is also what is natural. If the Stoics are suggesting that, to behave ethically, we must resist our irrational nature, unethical behaviors become the default. The Stoic sage is recast as a figure resisting nature rather than embodying it and an individual can rightfully expect and, perhaps, excuse their ethical lapses. They are, after all, working at odds with their own nature. To expect a human to consistently operate contrary to how they are construed is akin to expecting a dog to go through life only ever walking on its hind legs. It having the capacity to perform this feat says nothing about whether such a prolonged performance would be natural for it. It should be clear this is not what the Stoics had in mind.

Nor did the Stoics ignore this apparent irrationality. “...our senses inform us about the world in a fairly reliable fashion, and most of our beliefs about medium-size objects are true.... However, the Stoics postulate pandemic error when it comes to matters of evaluation: all of the individuals around us, as well as our cultures, laws, and institutions, are wildly misguided in our assessments of what is good and bad (Brennan, 2003, p. 264). While our senses seem to work as one might expect, when it comes to matters of deep and abiding importance, the rationality of our nature fails us. Brennan goes on to point out that, although emotions “...are anomalous and flawed as examples of human motivation, they are also the most familiar form of impulse, and—by some sort of irony—we have significantly more evidence from Stoicism about these vicious motivations than we do for any of the virtuous motivations that the Stoics espoused” (2003, p.264). While the theory states that we are rational and virtuous by nature, the evidence points to our being abysmal judges motivated by brutish emotions.

This leaves the Stoic enthusiast with an apparent dilemma. Either they admit that the central tenet of Stoicism must, considering the mounting scientific evidence to the contrary, be incorrect, or they ignore and explain away the scientific evidence in an effort to defend their preferred theory. To choose the first option is to renounce Stoicism. To choose the second is to refute it, for it is a philosophy that values the development of ever greater objectivity—an aspect of the Discipline of Assent—in those who would practice it. There is, however, a third option: one that relies on understanding the concepts of self-leadership and healthy psychic multiplicity.

Psychic Multiplicity

“You know, you’re a little complicated after all.”

“Oh no,” she assured him hastily. “No, I’m not really—I’m just a—I’m just a whole lot of different simple people.”

– F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night*, 1962, p. 292

In hopes of navigating the potential contradictions and inconsistencies previously outlined, I will be drawing on Internal Family Systems (IFS). This therapeutic model not only has a



well-established history of success in clinical settings, it is increasingly well-researched and supported (Catanzaro, 2016; Geib, 2016; Haddock et al, 2016).

To provide a basic outline of this model, it portrays the individual human psyche not as a singular entity, but as one comprising many parts. These parts are themselves personalities with their own priorities, memories, and default strategies. Each was created by the individual to deal with a perceived threat that person faced, often during childhood. Those that have proven useful in the past likely enjoy greater status in the psychic hierarchy and, as a result, take the lead more often. Those that produced unwanted outcomes in the past are often suppressed and, in IFS terminology, 'exiled'. But, regardless of their current status, all of these parts remain present and on alert for their associated triggers—the ones that will set their response strategy in motion.

This model of the human psyche is useful for several reasons. First, it aligns with the intuitive sense most people have of their inner world. Even those with no knowledge of IFS will naturally speak in the language of parts (e.g. 'A part of me is actually looking forward to this'). People talk of experiencing inner conflict—of debating what to do. Who, it is reasonable to ask, are the parties participating in this debate if not distinct parts of the person's psyche?

Second, when applied, this model can facilitate human development. According to the psycho-philosophical metamodel of Integral Theory (Wilbur, 2000; Wilbur, 2007) which, among other things, synthesizes the developmental models of researchers, religions, and philosophers from around the world and throughout history, development from one stage to the next takes place in three distinct movements to be described hereafter.

Development and Parts

During the first movement, the individual is melded with their current state. That state, phenomenologically speaking, is inseparable from them. This might be an emotional state such as when people say 'I am angry', a phrase which equates their entire existence to a single emotional experience. Or, the state in question might be a role played by the person. Regardless, for development to occur, that state must go from subject to object. That is, it must go from being lived to being observed as the individual becomes cognizant of the space between themselves and the state. Anger becomes an emotional experience the individual is aware of having.

The second movement consists of identifying what is possible now that the state has been objectified. This may mean exploring the cause of the state to determine whether it is warranted. It may lead to an acknowledgement of the state that allows it to pass without incident. For those practicing Stoicism, distance from one's current state creates the space needed to reconnect with rationality and virtue. One cannot use impressions properly until they have been identified as such. Through the exploration and discovery of other options, the individual does more than merely distance themselves from that state. They transcend it.

Finally, the state is reintegrated by the individual. This involves accepting the state, recognizing it as one aspect among many, and placing it into the service of the individual so it becomes useful. Anger—once it has been made an object of experience rather than a pervasive quality of existence—can be transmuted into something productive rather than destructive. The



same emotional impulse, with the infusion of virtue, ceases to be anger becoming, instead, a quality such as resolve, resilience, or forthrightness. The individual has gone from being angry, to experiencing anger, to harnessing or aligning the energy of anger.

This tripartite movement—distance, transcendence, and integration—is how development takes place. The parts-based language of IFS facilitates development by providing a convenient and intuitive language that allows the individual to accept the nature of their subjective experience without being subsumed by it. This language compliments the Stoic practice of *prosoche* in that the latter function allows one to go from being the experience to recognizing the experience, while the former provides the means to accept the reality of that experience while simultaneously creating distance from it.

Dealing with the Dilemma

With respect to the irrationality dilemma previously outlined, the IFS model provides a solution. According to this model, it is possible for an individual to be rational by nature despite behaving in a seemingly irrational manner. This is because the various parts that wield influence over a person are behaving rationally according to their often-outdated model of the world and of the individual nested within it. These parts were formed at an earlier time, often during childhood. As a result, they possess a child's rationality and worldview. These parts are doing what they believe necessary to protect an earlier version of the individual—exhibiting not a lack of rationality, but a lack of awareness. A part that responds to the individual's frustration by getting angry might do so because responding with anger resulted in the 10-year-old version of the individual achieving their desired outcome. Anger, then, is a proven, useful strategy and employing it seems, to this part, entirely rational. In other words, the parts are trying to help, but do not know conditions have changed. They do not know that the individual is more capable now than they once were or that these learned strategies are no longer viable in the world that individual has come to inhabit.

Were rationality limited to this function, the IFS model would provide a pyrrhic solution to Stoicism's irrationality dilemma. What would it say, after all, for a philosophy to position rationality as its highest ideal if the meaning of rationality encompassed such misguided, childish applications? But, IFS also places a distinctly Stoic element—the Self—at the center of its model. This Self is described as the seat of consciousness (Schwartz, 2023b). It is something we are each gifted with at birth and, while our many parts may develop over the course of our lives, our Self does not. Rather, development happens by ever more closely and consistently aligning ourselves with our Self.

The Self is always accessible and, for those who know what to look for, it is apparent when someone—oneself included—is living connected to the Self. This is because such connection not only changes the quality of a person's presence, but is characterized by eight resources of the Self. These are

- Calm- resilience and equanimity; the tendency to avoid being emotionally overwhelmed
- Curiosity- inquisitiveness, lack of defensiveness; the tendency to avoid hasty judgments



- Confidence- groundedness, solidity; the stable platform from which we face life's challenges
- Connectedness- an echo of our shared divinity; the widening of the circle of concern; the 'I am you' realization
- Clarity- objective perception; seeing through the extreme beliefs and emotions characteristic of our parts
- Creativity- connection to the source of inspiration; replacing 'I don't know' with 'I'll try this'
- Courage- independence, proactiveness; the willingness to do what needs doing
- Compassion- feeling for, the desire to help (Schwartz & Sweezy, 2020).

While these eight resources are not exactly the four Stoic virtues, it is easy to see many Stoic themes present in them and even to map them onto those core virtues. Such an effort might look something like this:



Not only does the Self have access to these resources, it also has the capacity to heal the parts, turning them from well-meaning but misguided challenges to the individual's integrity, into valued contributors acting in alignment with the whole individual. This is how an angry part is transformed into one that bolsters resilience or determination. In explaining this transformation, it is helpful to remember that there is rationality operating behind even the most seemingly irrational decisions. The parts are rational by nature, but limited in their options and mistaken in their assumptions. That is, they demonstrate internal consistency. They were created to address what was, at the time, perceived to be a threat beyond the individual's capacity. That they continue to function in this way regardless of how things have changed is to be expected since, as Marcus Aurelius puts it, "Everything has to do what it was made for," (2003, 7.55).

But, the essential rationality of these parts is demonstrated by the fact that they can be educated. That is, prolonged contact with the Self expands their perceived options and challenges their assumptions. A part may learn that anger in response to frustration is unwarranted because that response does nothing to protect a Self that is always calm and confident. This, in turn, may lead to it recognizing other possible and, ultimately, to more helpful responses.



Thus, what IFS provides is a model of the human psyche that is fully consistent with Stoicism while providing an elegant solution to the rationality dilemma. Humans are rational by nature but, in the case of their parts, that rationality often operates according to a no-longer-useful model of the world. As a result, we get a wide array of what, from the perspective of an outside observer, appear to be irrational behaviors. Luckily, we possess a Self, unbound by faulty assumptions, that is capable of setting these parts right.

Psychic Multiplicity in Stoicism

While students of Stoicism might object that psychic multiplicity violates the philosophy's unified theory of the cosmos, there is no reason to believe the IFS model is inconsistent with the Stoic one. Quite to the contrary, both models are best described as holonic. That is, they posit a schema in which wholes—such as the cosmos or the human mind—are comprised of parts that are, in themselves, wholes. This is why an individual can at once be inseparable from Nature and an autonomous, moral agent. According to Marcus Aurelius, intelligence is, "Singular, not plural.... Even if it seems to be divided," (2003, p. 154). The mind can be helpfully understood as multiply in nature, even while acknowledging that it is a unified entity.

Indeed, the passions about which the Stoics spoke so regularly sound remarkably similar to the parts of IFS. Robertson (2010) points out that Stoicism does not recognize a distinction between cognition and emotion. Rather, thought and emotion are understood to be facets of one another. Thoughts are associated with certain emotions, and emotions have characteristic thoughts. This aligns with the IFS model wherein the parts can be described as more or less complex collections of characteristic thoughts and emotions that tend to follow established patterns. The Stoics further describe the passions as potentially controlling. Indeed, this is what a Stoic seeks to avoid through education and training. But, this raises the question of what manner of relationship exists between the passions and the person who harbors them. For the passions to be controlling, they must be capable of exerting control over something that they are either part of, or that exists alongside them. To make either concession is to functionally accept a parts-based model of the human mind.

One possible distinction between the models is that, whereas a Stoic might describe the passions as being universal and even elemental forces, an IFS practitioner would refer to them as sub-personalities embodying a previously formulated strategy. In truth, this is a relatively minor difference. Certainly a Stoic would admit that, while anger is a common human passion, a given individual will embody that anger in a manner that is idiosyncratic to them. Likewise, an IFS practitioner would have no qualms with acknowledging that there are archetypal sub-personality characteristics common to all people. Add to this the concept of a daemon, which maps directly onto the Self of IFS, and you are clearly left with a multiplicative model of the mind.

Further evidence of the compatibility of the models can be found in the use of aphorism to train oneself (Robertson, 2010, p. 52). This foundational Stoic practice makes little sense if the source of the lesson is also the recipient—the rational, cosmic essence of the mind need not instruct itself on proper functioning. If, however, the daemon is understood to be a teacher seeking to develop the passions through the repetitive invocation of wise sentiments, the practice appears



entirely sensible. As an example, amor fati is intended for the parts that would reject external realities and seek control where it cannot be found.

Finally, consider these words from Marcus Aurelius:

Four habits of thought to watch for, and erase from your mind when you catch them. Tell yourself: This thought is unnecessary. This one is destructive to the people around you. This wouldn't be what you really think (to say what you don't think—the definition of absurdity. And the fourth reason for self-reproach: that the more divine part of you has been beaten and subdued by the degraded mortal part... (2003, p. 154)

The ideas expressed here—that one can tell oneself something, think what one does not really think, and allow the divine part to be beaten by the mortal one—all clearly point to psychic multiplicity.

Self-Leadership

The subject of self-leadership is a staple of leadership research. It is defined as the process whereby people influence themselves to achieve the sense of direction and motivation necessary to perform (Neck et al, 2003; Neck et al, 2006). From a Stoic perspective, this definition is lacking as it does not stipulate the nature of the process involved in producing that sense of direction and motivation. It is a definition that leaves too much space for irrational, unethical motives. Take, for instance, the desire for revenge. Its origin is internal, and it provides the direction and motivation for subsequent action. Even if the consequences of that action might be considered positive—say improving your sales numbers, or moving on from a failed relationship—the potency of the Stoic objection is not diminished. While the outcomes produced may qualify as preferred indifferents, acquiescing to and being led by a desire for revenge, in itself, constitutes a moral failing. In the examples provided, neither better sales numbers nor a new relationship can do anything to ameliorate the degradation of character associated with acting out of such a desire.

An emphasis on securing intended outcomes is understandable when discussing the leadership of others. If meaningful progress towards the shared goals of a group is not tangibly demonstrated with enough regularity, the leader will lose influence (Kouzes & Posner, 2011). But, as far as self-leadership is concerned, this emphasis must be rebalanced. While it is no less possible to lose influence with yourself, such losses tend to follow, not from a lack of results, but from a loss of self-respect. Consistently turning away from your rational, virtuous nature and choosing instead to act out of fear or indolence is how self-respect, and thus the ability to self-influence, is lost. It does not take many such choices before a person's best intentions and most worthwhile goals are met with a defensive response from their parts as they seek to protect the individual from the disappointment of yet another self-identity threatening broken promise (Schwartz & Sweezy, 2019). Sincere intentions such as 'I will start eating better' or 'I will be more patient with others' are met with refutations and denunciations: 'No you won't, and you know it. That will never work anyway. What's the difference if you wait until tomorrow to start?'. The established definition of self-leadership shared above fails to address the quality of the motivation



and the ethicality of its associated direction. For these reasons, it is overly permissive and inconsistent, failing to distinguish healthy self-leadership from what IFS might term parts-leadership, wherein an individual relinquishes control to their competing and dysfunctional parts—a strategy that serves neither the individual, nor their parts.

IFS provides a more exact and Stoically-aligned definition of self-leadership (or Self-leadership). According to Schwartz (2023a), the state of Self-leadership is one in which the individual has separated from their many obscuring, warring parts, connecting instead with the Self, "...something deeper and more foundational... something that spiritual conditions often call 'soul' or 'essence'"(p. 8). Referring to this state as Self-leadership highlights the kind of relationship that the Self has to the parts. It is one of compassion and acceptance, but also of profound influence. The Self knows that the parts, despite their failings, are not bad actors to be punished or mistakes to be fixed. Rather, they are nascent potentials to be developed.

Stoic Parallels

This definition and model align with Stoicism in at least three ways. First, as previously stated, the Self of IFS parallels the daemon or divine spirit as it exists in humans. Both models, then, identify a cosmic seed—a connection to all of Nature—that is common to all people. The state of being self-led in IFS is equivalent, in Stoic terms, to living in accord with Nature. To act from the Self is to be rational and virtuous. Whereas popular misconceptions of Stoicism suggest that it counsels the denial, suppression, or rejection of emotions, IFS agrees with the actual teachings of Stoicism: our emotions are no more to be denied than any other reality of our existence. They are to be honestly recognized and accepted, without ever being put in charge.

The second similarity between the IFS model of self-leadership and the Stoic teachings is that the relationship between the Self and parts mirrors that sought by the Stoic practitioner and other people. This is a relationship of compassion and service, of leading by example, and of refraining from judgement. At this time and in this place, people and parts are who they are. As with all facets of reality, the only rational response to this is acceptance. The Stoic leader, then, leads from the inside out. They create an internal world of self-led relationships and allow the external world to catch up.

Finally, the internal model of IFS mirrors the Stoic model of the cosmos and our place in it. We are each of us a part of that cosmos existing within that cosmos. To paraphrase Allan Watts (n.d.), we are apertures through which the universe perceives itself. Each of us is limited and, to the extent that we live out of alignment with Nature, flawed. But, through us—our struggling with a unique set of challenges and embodying a personal version of cosmic alignment—the cosmos bears witness to its own unfolding and, in so doing, develops in complexity and grandeur. This same dynamic characterizes how our parts exist with respect to our whole psyche. They are each uniquely limited and challenged. But without these imperfections, we would have no means to develop. As they align with the Self, their unique role becomes clear. The parts that once obscured our Self are polished into facets that contribute to its beauty and complexity.



Harmony with the Self

This model offers yet another benefit by providing clear meaning to one of the more obscure Stoic admonitions, that of living in harmony with oneself. Marcus Aurelius describes three harmonies that characterize eudaemonia as the Stoics understood it (2003). Among these harmonies is that of living in harmony with Nature, which consists of behaving rationally. As has been discussed, the Self is equivalent to the bestowed, cosmic intelligence. Thus, to act from the Self is to live in accord with Nature.

The second harmony concerns other people and the embodying of human nature. Namely, it consists of behaving virtuously as only humans are capable of, and of comporting oneself in a prosocial manner since humans are meant to work together and to rely on one another. The eight resources of the Self that IFS identifies are clearly prosocial and virtuous.

Finally, there is the admonition to live in harmony with one's individual or personal nature. Of the three, this one is the least clearly explained by either the original Stoic texts or the interpretations that followed. Indeed, if one attempted to interpret this tenet through the lens of a singular psyche, it would be entirely reasonable to dismiss it as self-evident and circular. Whether it be making consequential life decisions, deciding whether to take an unethical shortcut, or engaging in prolonged internal conflict, anything a singular self does would, by definition, be consistent with its nature since that nature could only reasonably be described in terms of the choices associated with it.

This brings us full circle to the irrationality dilemma. It is unreasonable to claim that a singular self is rational by nature if that self consistently behaves in irrational ways. The concept of the Self clears this up. To live in harmony with one's individual or personal nature is to live from one's individual apportionment of Nature—that is, with one's Self in the lead. The state of Self-leadership is one in which the parts are brought into purposeful alignment and, thereby, made capable of constructive contribution. An additional harmony is to be found in the clarity of purpose that characterizes the state of self-leadership. Nature is teleological. Therefore, so too is the Self.

The researchers cited previously are correct in identifying motivation and direction as essential elements of self-leadership. But, for such leadership to be sound, these elements must be preceded and grounded by a certain quality of being. Otherwise, it is all too easy to confuse teleological Self-leadership with dysfunctional leadership-by-the-parts.

The Steps to Self-Leadership

Practicing self-leadership begins with prosoche. Schwartz identifies mindfulness as both a way to access and a consequence of connecting with the Self (2023). Clearly, effective management of one's internal state requires an awareness of that state that is best achieved through mindful attention. The rational character of prosoche, however, provides a second crucial element. Awareness and acceptance are often enough to accelerate the metabolism of emotion. That is, noticing, allowing for, and paying attention to anger, for instance, will result in that anger dissipating more quickly than it would if ignored or suppressed. But, as we learned from our initial definition, Self-leadership requires more than simply an effective response to one's emotions. The



equanimity produced by such a response is merely the foundation to which direction and motivation must be added if performance is to be produced. These additional elements are accounted for by the rational character of *prosoche*. Self-leadership requires the simultaneous awareness of one's state and maintaining of one's vision, and the practice of *prosoche* accounts for both.

Just as with effective other-focused leadership, self-leadership must embrace the way things are. Denying reality is both a demonstration of fear and a reliable way to decrease the quality of your decisions. Self-leadership does not require the suppression of parts, but the alignment of those parts. For such alignment to manifest, the parts must first be made to feel welcomed. Just as with the members of a group, parts who feel safe and welcomed will look for opportunities to contribute.

Socrates, the Stoic Sage, and Final Remarks

There are several remaining points worth making as they will provide an alternative, and hopefully illuminating, interpretation of concepts over which there has historically been some contention. The first of these relates to Socratic intellectualism.

Socrates' famously denied weakness of will: "...no one ever does wrong willingly and always acts in accordance with what they believe to be right" (Sellars, 2006, p. 47). In other words, when people know better, they do better. While early Stoics seem to have agreed with this sentiment, over time Stoicism came to understand philosophy as *techne*—that is, theoretical knowledge must be consciously practiced and applied if the individual is to train themselves to behave properly. This, of course, raises the irrationality objection at the core of this paper. Namely, one would expect a by-nature-rational animal to naturally recognize and apply better knowledge as it was acquired. And yet, this position was abandoned by later Stoics who perceived it as untenable given how people, in actuality, conduct themselves. Yet, the IFS interpretation of Stoicism can synthesize both positions. Namely, while the parts are resistant to change—or, rather, to being changed—the self is curious, flexible, and responsive. Thus, knowledge does translate into behavior provided the person is engaged in self-leadership. The practical training component that Stoics identify as an essential complement to the study of theory is equally preserved, albeit modified. It is not that we, as singular minds, struggle to apply new knowledge, but that we struggle to overcome the resistance of our parts so that our Self can do what comes naturally: translate new knowledge into different behaviors. In a more general sense, then, Stoic training may be less analogous to dying a cloth than it is to removing the stubborn stains from one.

A second point follows from this and relates to the ideal towards which students of Stoicism are instructed to orient themselves—that of the Sage. The contention on this issue has revolved around the question of whether anyone has achieved the status of being a Sage, or whether it is purely an ideal used to guide those on the path (Sellars, 2006, p. 38). If the IFS model does indeed map onto Stoicism in the ways outlined here, it suggests something critical about the nature of the Sage and of making progress towards that state. Namely, such progress does not consist of climbing a mountain to reach some new height or of adding capabilities to supplement an otherwise insufficient existence; the path to the Stoic Sage travels down to our depths and is traversed by removing the layers that conceal who each of us are already. One does not become a Sage but,



rather, reveals their Sage. To truly live in accord with Nature means to do so both cosmically and personally. But, of course, they are one and the same. The Sage is neither a thought experiment nor some storied historical figure. It resides within each of us—our individual, immanent expression of the cosmos. The Self is the Sage and, when we lead from it, so too are we.

Based on this exploration, IFS appears to provide not only a suitable solution to the rationality dilemma of Stoicism, but a compatible model of the human psyche able to reveal aspects and interpretations of the philosophy that might otherwise escape notice. While there doubtless exist points of disagreement between the respective models, development, whether of individuals or philosophies, will always require the exploration of new territory and integration of what is discovered with what is established.

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