Antiochus’ Peripatetic argument from oikeiōsis in Cicero’s De Finibus 5

**P1.** Every substance has an ‘appropriate telos’ which corresponds to the definition of its ‘natural kind’. The telos being species-specific, every animal experiences its own striving for it, according to its peculiar constitution:

T1 quoniam autem animi appetitus a principio fuit ut ea quae dixi quam perfectissima natura haberemus, confitendum est, cum id adepti simus quod appetitum sit, in eo quasi in ultimo consistere naturam atque id esse summum bonum. *Fin.* 5.44

since however the earliest impulse was such as to incline us to acquire the most fully developed form that nature allows, as already said, we must agree that when we have attained to that which our impulse aimed at, nature halts at that point, having reached, as it were, her goal, and there finds the ultimate good.

T2 Quoniam autem sua cuiusque animantis natura est, necesse est finem quoque omnium hunc esse, ut natura expleatur (...), sed extrema illa et summa, quae quaerimus, inter animalium genera distincta et dispertita sint et sua cuique propria et ad id apta, quod cuiusque natura desideret. *Fin.* 5.25

Now since each creature has a constitution of its own, it follows inevitably that while the supreme good for all consists in the perfection of their nature (...), yet those ultimate and highest aims, which are the subjects of our inquiry, are severally apportioned and distributed among the different species of living creatures and are peculiar in the case of each class, and adapted to the objects which the constitution of each class requires.
P2. Striving in organisms arises from and is directed at things which are appropriate objects of desire (οικεία) perceived by perception, phantasia or nous1:

T1 ergo omni animali illud, quod appetit, positum est in eo, quod naturae est accommodatum. Fin. 5.24

Therefore for every animal its object of desire is to be found in what is appropriate to its nature (sc. οικείον).

T2 ο Θεόφραστός φησιν «εί ζωήν είχεν ὁ πλούτος, πρὸς μόνον ἃν ἀπήλθε τούς ἀγαθούς, ἕκαστον γὰρ τοῦ οἰκείου ἐφίεται ἀγαθῷ(...) τούτο δὲ αὐτῷ καὶ κατὰ φύσιν» Scholion in Platonis Leges 1 631C= Theophrastus Fr. 507 FHS & G.

Theophrastus says, ‘If wealth had life, it would only go to men who are good. For each (living) things seeks the which is appropriate to it (...) and this is also according to nature for it.

P3. Since the oikeia telos (conceived in the case of human beings as eudaimonia) is the final goal of striving (by way of combining all specific orekta, or desirable things), there must be a primary (in the temporal-analytical sense)2 goal (or goals) of striving whose desire leads, through a succession of different stages, to the final end i.e. to eudaimonia3:

T1 quid autem sit, quod ita moveat itaque a natura in primo ortu appetatur, non constat, deque eo est inter philosophos, cum summum bonum exquiritur, omnis dissensio. Fin. 5.17

But what that object is which is the principle of motion and is in this way sought by nature at the very moment of birth, is not agreed, and on this matter great divergence appears among philosophers during the search for the supreme good.

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In time it is prior in this sense: the actual member of a species is prior to the potential member of the same species, though the individual is potential before it is actual. I mean that the matter and the seed and that which is capable of seeing, which are potentially a man and corn and seeing, but not yet actually so, are prior in time to this particular man who now exists actually, and to the corn and to the seeing subject.
3 Cf. Met. Θ, 1050a7-10: καὶ ὅτι ἂν εἶ ἄρχῃ βαδίζει τὸ γεγονόμενον καὶ τέλος (ἀρχή γὰρ τὸ οὖ ἐνέκα, τοῦ τέλους δὲ ἐνέκα ἡ γένεσις), τέλος δ’ ἡ ἐνέργεια, καὶ τοῦτον χάριν ἡ δύναμις λαμβάνεται.
T2 διὸ πᾶσα πόλις φύσει ἔστιν, εἰπέρ καὶ αἱ πρὸς ται κοινωνίαι. τέλος γὰρ αὕτη ἐκεῖνον, ἥ δὲ φύσις τέλος ἔστιν. Pol. 1252b30-2

And therefore, if the earlier forms of society are natural, so is the *polis*, for it is the end of them, and the nature of a thing is its end.

T3 Φανερώτατον δ' ἐστὶ τὸ τοιοῦτον ἐπὶ τὴν τῶν παιδῶν ἡλικίαν βλέψαιν ἐν τούτοις γὰρ τῶν μὲν ὑστερον ἔξεσθεν ἑσομένων ἔστιν ἱδεῖν ὅσον ἵνα καὶ ὁπέρματα4, διαφέρει δ' οὐδὲν ὡς εἴπειν ἡ ψυχὴ τῆς τῶν θηρίων ψυχῆς κατὰ τὸν χρόνον τούτων, ἃστ' οὐδὲν ἄλογον εἰ τὰ μὲν ταύτα τὰ δὲ παραπλήσια τὰ δ' ἀνάλογον ὑπάρχει τοῖς ἄλλοις ζῴοις. *Historia Animalium* 7.588a31-588b4

This kind of thing is clearest if we look at the age of childhood; for in children may be observed as it were the traces and seeds of the dispositions that they will have later5, yet their soul at this period has practically no difference from that of wild animals, so that one is justified in saying that some psychical qualities are the same in the other animals as well, while others are very like, and others are analogous.

Cf.

quamquam enim vereor, ne nimius in hoc genere videar, tamen omnes veteres philosophi, maxime nostri, ad incunabula accedunt, quod in pueritia faciliisse se arbitrantur naturae voluntatem posse cognoscere. *Fin.* 55

Now although I am afraid of being thought to push on in this line of argument too far, still all the older thinkers (sc. Academics and Peripatetics), particularly those of our school, go back to the nursery because they think that in childhood they can most readily observe the will of nature.

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4 Cf. *Fin.* 5.18: quorum similia sunt prima in animis, quasi virtutum igniculi et semina.

5 Cf. *Fin.* 5.43: est enim natura sic generata vis hominis, ut ad omnem virtutem perciendam facta videatur, ob eamque causam parvi virtutum simulacris, quorum in se habent semina, sine doctrina moventur. ‘Nature indeed has so created the human power (potentiality?) as to make it plain that they are formed with a view to the acquisition of all virtue, and for that reason children are stirred by the resemblances of virtues, the seeds of which they possess within themselves- and that quite apart from learning.’
The striving of the organism towards an oikeion telos is a desire for being or activity, for which the nomen actionis oikeiosis can be used (cf. the term teleiosis).

With justice therefore have the weightiest thinkers sought for the source of the supreme good in nature, and have supposed that the impulse towards things which are by nature appropriate is implanted in all human beings, because such objects are inseparable from that corresponding prompting of nature whereby human beings love their own being.

And the bee is somehow attracted by the oak tree as to something affiliated to it. (From the book by Theophrastus On types of Honey).

There are external oikeia, as also those pertaining to the body and the soul (both emotion and intellect). Virtuous oikeiosis is shaped by experience, habit and education and results in reflexivity on the notion of the oikeion itself (i.e. self-knowledge).

This arises at birth, since children are loved by their parents and the whole house is united by the bonds of coupling and family, and then spreads gradually outwards, first to blood relatives, then to kin by marriage, next friends, then neighbours, and then to fellow-citizens and to friends and allies in the public sphere. Finally, it embraces the whole human kind.

Cf. The doxography is entitled Ἀριστοτέλους ἔρημος Λοίπον Περιπατητικὸν Ηθικὸν and is found in ch. 7.13-26 of Ioannis Stobaei Anthologiae [Eclogai] Bk.II ed. C. Wachsmuth, Berlin, 1884 (pp. 116.19-152.25). It has been traditionally regarded as an `eclectic` source bearing influences from Stoicism and

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6 NE 1153a11-12: καὶ τέλος οὗ πασῶν ἔτερον τι, `άλλα τόν εἰς τὴν τελεσθεῖν ἀγομένον τῆς φύσεως; Cf. Met. 1021b20-23: καὶ ἡ ἀριστεία τελειωσις τις ἀκαστῶν γὰρ τότε τέλειον καὶ οὐδεσθα πᾶσα τότε τελεία, ὅταν κατὰ τῷ εἶδος τῆς οἰκείας ἀρετῆς μὴν ἐλλείπη μόριον τῶν κατὰ φύσιν μεγέθους.

7 The doxography is entitled Ἀριστοτέλους καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν Περιπατητικῶν περὶ τῶν ἡθικῶν and is found in ch. 7.13-26 of Ioannis Stobaei Anthologiae [Eclogai] Bk.II ed. C. Wachsmuth, Berlin, 1884 (pp. 116.19-152.25). It has been traditionally regarded as an `eclectic` source bearing influences from Stoicism and
It is obvious therefore that we have a natural affinity and friendship towards everybody, which reflects the things that are chosen for their own sake and are in accordance with reason.

**T2** Omne animal se ipsum diligit ac, simul et ortum est, id agit, se ut conservet, quod hic ei *primus ad omnem vitam tuendam appetitus a natura datur*, se ut conservet atque ita sit affectum, ut optime secundum naturam affectum esse possit. *Fin.* 5.24

(1) Every animal loves itself and upon its birth its acts for its self-preservation; (2) for this impulse is given to it from the beginning by nature for the sake of the protection of its whole life and in order for it to preserve itself and to be in the best condition in accordance with nature.

*Cf.* Καὶ πρῶτον μὲν ὑφέγεσθαι τὸν εἶναι, φύσει γὰρ ὕκειώθαι πρὸς ἑαυτὸν, δὴ δὲ καὶ προσηκόντως ἀσμενίζειν μὲν ἐν τοῖς κατὰ φύσιν, δυσχεραίνειν δὲ ἐπὶ τοῖς παρὰ φύσιν. (Ar.) Didymus ap. Stobaeus *Ecl.* 2 p.118.11-14 W.

And first of all (human beings) desire to be alive, as they are familiarized to themselves by nature; that is why they take a suitable pleasure in things according to nature and are annoyed by things, which are against nature.

**T3** nam cum ita nati factque simus, ut et agendi aliquid et diligendi aliquos et liberalitatis et referendae gratiae principia in nobis contineremus….

Now inasmuch as we are so born and so constructed that we hold within us the first beginnings of action and affection and generosity and gratitude..

**T4** ex eo autem, quod statuerit esse, quo primum natura moveatur, existet recti etiam ratio atque honesti. *Fin.* 5.19

From that object which is decided to be the first cause of natural movement, there will arise also the principles of uprightness and the *kalon*.

*Cf.* δεῖ δὴ τὸ ἡθὸν προφύσαρχειν πως οἰκεῖον τῆς ἀρετῆς, στέργον τὸ καλὸν καὶ δυσχεραῖνον τὸ αἰσχρόν. *NE* 10.1179b29-31

The character, then, must somehow be already familiar to excellence, loving what is noble and hating what is base.

combining them with Peripatetic ideas, see Pohlenz (1940), Annas (1993). By contrast, the ‘original’ Peripatetic doctrine of the doxography has been first defended by von Arnim (1926), Dirlmeier (1937) and later by Magnaldi (1991).
Almost all have admitted that the object with which practical wisdom is concerned and what it desires to attain should be what is appropriate and what belongs to (our) nature, and such that in itself it entices and allures the impulse of the soul which the Greeks call ὁρμή.

After virtue was introduced, as we showed, by the bodily and external goods and turned to view itself, because it belongs to things which are according to nature much more than the bodily virtues, it was familiarized to itself as to something choiceworthy for its own sake and more in relation to itself than to the bodily virtues.

Thought is itself thinkable in exactly the same way as its objects are. For in the case of objects which involve no matter, what thinks and what is thought are identical; for speculative knowledge and its object are identical.

But when (sc. the creature) has grown somewhat older and begins to grasp to what extent anything affects and relates to it, then it (1) gradually (sensim) begins to progress and know itself and to comprehend for what reason it has the desire of the mind we reffered to, and finally (2) it begins to strive after the things that it perceives to be suited to its nature and to repel their opposites.

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8 This is the mss. reading as opposed to αὐτὴ proposed by Madvig and adopted by Wachsmuth.