

Stoicism

OIKEIOSIS: the Stoic view about the place of other people in one's life, ethically speaking

- *Oikeiosis* is a word that has no fully satisfactory translation. It's a technical word in Stoicism.
 - Etymologically, it is from *oikos* "house, home"
 - The idea of *oikeiosis* is, roughly, that one should work to collapse distinctions between one's family members, one's larger circle of friends, the larger circle of fellow Vermonters/New Englanders, the larger circle of US Americans, the larger circle of Westerners, the larger circle of the world, and ultimately, the largest circle of all intelligent beings.
 - Diogenes Laertius 7.85
 - *They say that the first inclination (i.e. impulse) which an animal has is to protect itself, as nature brings herself to take an interest in it from the beginning, as Chrysippus affirms in the first book of his treatise on Ends; where he says, that the first and dearest object (i.e. oikeion thing) to every animal is its own existence, and its consciousness of that existence. For that it is not natural for any animal to be alienated from itself, or even to be brought into such a state as to be indifferent to itself, being neither alienated from nor interested in itself. It remains, therefore, that we must assert that nature has bound the animal to itself by the greatest unanimity and affection for by that means it repels all that is injurious, and attracts all that is akin to it and desirable. But as for what some people say, that the first inclination of animals is to pleasure, they say what is false. For they say that pleasure, if there be any such thing at all, is an accessory only, which, nature, having sought it out by itself, as well as these things which are adapted to its constitution, receives incidentally in the same manner as animals are pleased, and plants made to flourish.*
 - Moreover, say they, nature makes no difference between [291>] animals and plants, when she regulates them. so as to leave them without voluntary motion or sense; and some things too take place in ourselves in the same manner as in plants. But, as inclination in animals tends chiefly to the point of making them pursue what is appropriate (i.e. oikeion) to them, we may say that their inclinations are regulated by nature. And as reason is given to rational animals according to a more perfect principle, it follows, that to live correctly according to reason, is properly predicated of those who live according to nature. For nature is as it were the artist who produces the inclination.*
 - Seneca CXXI
 - *The periods of infancy, boyhood, youth, and old age, are different; but I, who have been infant, boy, and youth, am still the same. Thus, although each has at different times a different constitution, the adaptation of each to its constitution (i.e. oikeiosis) is the same. For nature does not consign boyhood or youth, or old age, to me; it consigns me to them. Therefore, the child is adapted to that constitution which is his at the present moment of childhood, not to that which will be his in youth. For even if there is in store for him any higher phase into which he must be changed, the state in which he is born is also according to nature. First of all, the living being is adapted to itself*
 - Hierocles (a Stoic from around 100 CE: quoted in Stobaeus 4.671-673)

- *Each one of us is as it were entirely encompassed by many circles, some smaller, others larger, the latter enclosing the former on the basis of their different and unequal dispositions relative to each other. The first and closest circle is the one which a person has drawn as though around a center, his own mind. This circle encloses the body and anything taken for the sake of the body. For it is virtually the smallest circle, and almost touches the center itself. Next, the second one further removed from the center but enclosing the first circle; this contains parents, siblings, wife, and children. The third one has in it uncles and aunts, grandparents, nephews, nieces, and cousins. The next circle includes the other relatives, and this is followed by the circle of local residents, then the circle of fellow tribesmen, next that of fellow citizens, and then in the same way the circle of people from neighboring towns, and then the circle of fellow-countrymen. The outermost and largest circle, which encompasses all the rest, is that of the whole human race. Once these have all been surveyed, it is the task of a well-tempered man, in his proper treatment of each group, to draw the circles together somehow towards the center, and to keep zealously transferring those from the enclosing circles into the enclosed ones. It is incumbent on us to respect people from the third circle as if they were those from the second, and again to respect our other relatives as if they were those from the third circle. ...*
- Cicero *de Finibus* III.62
 - *They think it is important to understand that it comes about by nature that children are loved by their parents, and that it is from this beginning that we pursue the completed universal community of the human race.*
- Anonymous Commentator on Plato's *Theaetetus* 5
 - *As for those who introduce justice on the basis of oikeiosis, if they say that it is equal for oneself and for the furthest Mysian, then justice is preserved, but it will be ... contrary to the evidence.*