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978-0-521-03988-8 - The Norms of Nature: Studies in Hellenistic Ethics

Edited by Malcolm Schofield and Gisela Striker

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## The Norms of Nature

Can moral philosophy alter our moral beliefs or our emotions? Does moral scepticism mean making up our own values, or does it leave us without moral commitments at all? Is it possible to find a basis for ethics in human nature? These are some of the main questions explored in this volume, which is devoted to the ethics of the Hellenistic schools of philosophy. Some of the leading scholars in the field have here taken a fresh look at the bases of the Stoics' and Epicureans' thinking about what the Greeks took to be the central questions of philosophy. Their essays, which originated in a conference held at Bad Homburg in 1983, the third in a series of conferences on Hellenistic philosophy, propose important new interpretations of the texts, and pose some fascinating problems about the different roles of argument and reason in ancient and modern moral philosophy.

This book will be of interest to moral philosophers and to scholars of Greek philosophy too.

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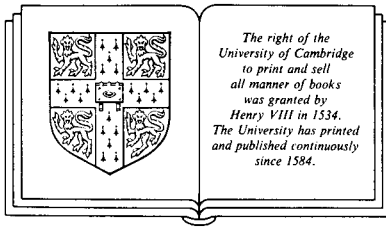
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# The Norms of Nature

## Studies in Hellenistic ethics

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## Acknowledgements

This book contains the papers delivered to the third in a sequence of recent conferences on Hellenistic philosophy. It is the successor to *Doubt and Dogmatism* (Oxford 1980) and *Science and Speculation* (Cambridge 1982). In concentrating on ethics it takes up the central concern of philosophy in the Hellenistic period, and offers new explorations of the major preoccupations of the Stoics, Epicureans and Sceptics. For the convenience of the reader these have been grouped under two heads: first come a series of studies of the way reason and argument in Hellenistic ethics bear more directly on emotional attitudes and on moral belief than does most modern moral philosophy; then follow essays on the views on the foundations of ethics and on the conceptions of happiness and the goal of life which govern Stoicism and Epicureanism.

The conference was held from 17–25 August 1983 at the conference centre of the Reimers-Stiftung in Bad Homburg. The following scholars attended the proceedings: Julia Annas, Jonathan Barnes, Dieter Birnbacher, Jacques Brunschwig, John Cooper, Pierluigi Donini, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, Dorothea Frede, Michael Frede, David Furley, Malte Hossenfelder, Brad Inwood, Anna Maria Ioppolo, Terry Irwin, André Laks, Geoffrey Lloyd, Anthony Long, Mario Mignucci, Martha Nussbaum, Günther Patzig, Malcolm Schofield, David Sedley, Richard Sorabji, Jürgen Sprute, and Gisela Striker. The Reimers-Stiftung not only offered members of the conference warm hospitality but provided generous financial support. We are most grateful for their help and for the care they took of us in beautiful surroundings. We also thank the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft for a handsome subvention to cover secretarial costs and the travel expenses of participants.

M.S.

G.S.

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## Preface

Günther Patzig

After two successful meetings in Oxford (1978) and in Paris (1980), the Third International Conference on Hellenistic Philosophy was held in August 1983 in Bad Homburg. The Reimers-Stiftung and the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft made it possible for 25 scholars from seven countries to discuss under ideal conditions the nine papers presented to the conference. We were lucky in having unusually fine weather; all participants will, I think, gladly remember the friendly informal discussions in the open air which often went on until late into the summer night.

The present volume will provide further evidence that Hellenistic philosophy is not only historically, but also philosophically interesting. The arguments of the Hellenistic philosophers are here explained and critically discussed by experts who have contributed to the scholarly debates on the Presocratics, Plato and Aristotle and also on modern philosophers. The participants and contributors were also fully conversant with today's systematic discussions of the philosophical themes dealt with in Hellenistic times. It is, therefore, a reasonable hope that this volume will be of value not only to students of Greek philosophy, but also to those, whose main interests are in the field of ethics proper.

In this way, the present volume, as its two predecessors, may help to bridge the gap between historical and systematic work in philosophy, a gap which is, in itself, somewhat artificial, since historical studies without systematic guidelines tend to be lacking in vivacity, whereas systematic discussions without historical perspective seem often somewhat parochial.

G.P.