

Rational Impressions and the Stoic Philosophy of Mind

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Abstract: This paper seeks to elucidate the distinctive nature of the rational impression on its own terms, asking precisely what it means for the Stoics to define *logikē phantasia* as an impression whose content is expressible in language. I argue first that impression, generically, is direct and reflexive awareness of the world, the way animals get information about their surroundings. Then, that the rational impression, specifically, is inherently conceptual, inferential, and linguistic, i.e. thick with propositional content, the way humans receive information from the world. When we suspend certain contemporary assumptions about propositional content, the textual evidence can be taken at face value to reveal why, for the Stoics, rational impressions are called thoughts (*noēseis*) and how the Stoics' novel semantic entities called *lekta* (roughly, the meanings of our words) depend on rational impressions for their subsistence.

At the heart of Stoic philosophy of mind is the rational impression (*logikē phantasia*). As it happens, the Stoics think that the mind resides in the heart, but this is not what makes the Stoic account interesting; seating the mind in the heart is a commonplace for the time. What sets the Stoics apart is their focus on mental phenomena of soul (*psychē*) over Aristotle's physiological mechanisms, and on semantic content over Plato's desiderative psychology — all of which begins with the rational impression. Much scholarly attention has been directed to the cataleptic impression central to Stoic epistemology, and to the downstream functions of assent and impulse at the heart of Stoic moral psychology. The rational impression itself, however, and thus the Stoic philosophy of mind proper, has been relatively neglected.¹ This paper seeks to elucidate the distinctive nature of the rational impression on its own terms, asking precisely what it means for the Stoics to define *logikē phantasia* as an impression whose content is expressible in language.²

First some brief background on Stoic theory. The Stoics are well known for their robust corporealism: they say that only bodies exist, or are, and they cast a large swath of reality as corporeal. For example, all qualities or properties encompassed by Plato's Forms, including even the virtues, and the soul itself are considered bodies. They reason that insofar as the soul and body

¹ With the exception of Barnouw (2002).

² S.E., *M.* 8.70 (33C), passage G below; parenthetical citations like 33C refer to Long & Sedley (1987) by chapter (33) and order therein (C).

interact, and all interaction must be corporeal, the soul must itself be a body.³ Virtue is also a body, namely the corporeal soul disposed a certain way, or in some state, like a well-worn leather glove with its own patina, shape, and suppleness.⁴ The Stoics are also well known for saying that, while only bodies exist, not everything that is Something (*ti*, the Stoics' highest ontological genus) exists. Alongside their innovatively robust category of corporeals (*sōmata*) that *exist* or *are* (*einai, on*), the Stoics recognized a class of incorporeal entities that *subsist* (*huphistanai*, have *hupostasis*); these include, canonically, place, void, time, and the *lekta*, or sayables, roughly the meanings of our words.⁵ Thus the Stoics are not brute corporealists, but sophisticated physicalists grappling with Plato's beard.⁶

Indeed, in order to approach the Stoics on their own terms, one must recognize how they cut across their predecessors' ways of thought. In this case, the differences between Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics on the philosophy of mind must be couched as a debate over the scope of physics — namely, whether there is a place for soul in physics. They each give different answers to the question, *How much can you say about the soul independent of body?* For Plato (and Descartes), the answer is (*almost*) *everything*, for Aristotle the answer is *some*, and for the Stoics it's *none*. Insofar as the Stoic soul is itself a body, there is no sense in which one can speak of soul without thereby speaking about body; and the topic of soul is squarely in the domain of physics, in stark contrast to Plato. On the other hand, insofar as the Stoics also see soul as a psychic entity entirely mixed with and yet separable from a distinct corporeal entity (the body), the Stoics are more like Plato than Aristotle. On this dualist understanding, the Stoic answer to how much can be said about soul without body is Plato's, (*almost*) *everything*; in contrast to Aristotle, Stoic soul is not what unifies an animal's body, but rather what gives it sensation and desire.⁷

Soul

I will begin by saying more about the soul considered as a body. Soul is *pneuma*, a portion of fiery breath in a certain tension (*tonikēn kinēsin*) “moving simultaneously inwards and outwards, the

³ Nemesius 78,7-79,2 (45C), 81,6-10 (45D).

⁴ Sextus Empiricus (SE), *M.* 11.22-6 (60G); Stobaeus 2.70,21-71,6 (60L), 2.73,1-15 (60J); Simplicius, *In Ar. Cat.* 212,12-213,1 (28N).

⁵ Alexander, *In Ar. Top.* 301,19-25 (27B); SE, *M.* 1.17 (27C); Galen, *Meth. med.* 10.155,1-8 (27G). I will often transliterate Greek terms to avoid awkward English, here *lekton* (singular) and *lekta* (plural); alternate translations of *lekton* include *what is said*, *what is meant*, *thing said*, *articulable*, *meaning*.

⁶ cf. de Harven (2015) and Vogt (2009).

⁷ Annas (1992, p.50-56) and Long (1999, p.564, 1982, p.34-36, & 44, contra Bonhoffer and Pohlenz).

outward movement producing quantities and qualities, and the inward one unity and substance” (Nemesius 70,6-71,4 (47J)). The cosmos is pervaded by *pneuma* as the immanent divine guiding principle, and each body is what it is in virtue of the particular state of rarity and tension of the portion of that *pneuma* that constitutes it. The Stoic *scala naturae* is a function of increasing complexity and unity due to the state of a body’s *pneuma*.⁸ A stone, for example, is a solid object that holds together in virtue of the tenor (*hexis*) of its *pneuma* acting on its matter. Plants are alive and are said to have physique (*phusis*) because their *pneuma* is more rarefied and in a greater state of tension than mere *hexis*; plants are therefore more complex entities than stones in that the tension of their *pneuma* is an internal principle of motion and rest rather than of mere unity. Finally, the *pneuma* in animals is yet more rarefied and complex, and is called *psychē* because the internal principle of motion and rest includes the capacity for impression and impulse. Thus, from the standpoint of Stoic physics, soul is a body insofar as it is *pneuma* in a certain state of tension.⁹

The soul’s corporeality can also be considered from a metaphysical standpoint, in terms of the so-called Stoic categories: substrate (*hupokeimenon*), qualified individual (*poion*), disposed individual (*pōs echon*), and relatively disposed individual (*pros ti pōs echon*).¹⁰ According to the Stoics, a complete analysis of any body makes reference to all four of these metaphysical aspects. Applying this four-fold analysis to soul, we can see that (1) soul *qua* substrate is *pneuma*; (2) each particular soul is a *poion* because its *pneuma* is in a state of tension such as to constitute an individual soul with certain qualities, characteristics and abilities; (3) the *pōs echon* is that individual soul in a certain state, literally *being in a certain way* — this is how the Stoics corporealize the virtues that flummoxed their materialist predecessors, and how they corporealize our thoughts. Virtue for the Stoics is a stable state of character by which you see the world aright; it is a *pōs echon* because it is a habituated state of the *poion*. Impressions, though they are temporary and fleeting, fall into this category as well because an impression just is the soul undergoing a *pathos*, i.e. being affected in some way and thus in a certain state. (4) Finally, every soul also lies in a determinate relation to its immediate surroundings and, ultimately, to the cosmos as a prior whole, so it is relatively disposed.¹¹

⁸ Annas (1992, p.51, 50-56).

⁹ Nemesius 291,1-6 (53O); Philo, *Leg. alleg.* 1.30 (53P), 2.22-3 (47P); Hierocles 1.5-33, 4.38-53 (53B); Galen, *Intr.* (47N).

¹⁰ I follow Long & Sedley in describing these as metaphysical *aspects* under which an object can be considered, although I am not entirely satisfied with the term; cf. Menn (1999), Rist (1969), Sedley (1982), and Sorabji (1988).

¹¹ The Stoics are interestingly comparable to priority monists as in Schaffer (2010).

Now, the Stoics recognized two senses of the term *soul*, or *psuchē*, (a) the corporeal entity as a whole that is mixed through and through with body, sustaining the composite animal, and (b) the commanding faculty (*hēgemonikon*, and sometimes *kurieuon*), which is the highest part of soul.¹² We have been considering soul in the first sense; the second sense refers to the *hēgemonikon*, the part by which an animal is aware of and engaged with itself and its surroundings — the locus of impressions. We turn now to this second sense of soul and thus to Stoic psychology and the philosophy of mind proper. The Stoics famously liken the soul to an octopus, with the commanding faculty located in the region of the heart, and seven other parts growing out from it and stretching into the body. Five of these parts are the senses, e.g. sight is *pneuma* that extends from the commanding faculty to the eyes. The other two are the reproductive faculty, or seed (*sperma*), extending from the commanding faculty to the genitals; and, in a deeply innovative move whose implications are at the heart of this paper, voice (*phonē*), extending from the commanding faculty of soul to the windpipe and tongue.¹³ Again, what is characteristic of soul, in contrast to the mere *phusis* of plants, is that it has impression and impulse (*hormē*); these psychic functions make an animal aware of the world, and able to interact with it. *Phantasia* and *hormē* are in effect the input and output faculties of the *hēgemonikon*, a stimulus-response mechanism presupposing a single subject or self that thinks and acts.¹⁴

***Phantasia*, generically**

We turn now to the Stoic account of *phantasia* considered generically, as the animal's input function.¹⁵ Starting from Aetius' testimony about Chrysippus, below, I will argue that *phantasiai* are states of direct, reflexive awareness of the world.

¹² SE, *M.* 7.232, 7.234 (53F); Calcidius 220 (53G); Annas (1992, p.63); Long (1982, p.239).

¹³ Aetius 4.21.1-4 (53H); Calcidius 220 (53G); SE, *M.* 7.157 (passage B); Long (1982, p.51); Sedley (1993, p.330-31).

¹⁴ For the relevant notion of self see Annas (1992, p.58-59, & 64), Inwood (1984, p.162-64), and Long (1991, p.107, & 1999), all of which I take to be compatible with cautions from Gill (2006)

¹⁵ This vexed term has been translated many different ways, as *appearance*, *image*, *representation*, *presentation*, *perception*, *impression*, and others. Although I will often transliterate *phantasia* (singular) and *phantasiai* (plural), I have chosen *impression* as the most phenomenologically neutral translation, which also captures the literalness of the impact of the world on soul and aptly conjures the empiricism of the modern era.

A. (1) (a) On the one hand, impression (*phantasia*) is an affection (*pathos*) coming about in the soul, revealing (*endeiknumenon*) itself and what has made it (*to pepoiēkos*); for example, whenever through sight (*dia opseōs*) we observe (*theōrōmen*) what is white (*to leukon*), an affection is what has been engendered in the soul through seeing (*dia horaseōs*). **(b)** And it is according to this impression (<*kata*> *touto to pathos*) that we are able to say that something white stands behind the motion in us (*hupokeitai kinoun hēmas*); and likewise, too, through touch and smell. **(c)** The impression is so-called from light; for just as light reveals (*deiknusi*) itself and the other things in its compass (*periechomena*), also impression reveals itself and what has made it. **(2)** On the other hand, an impressor (*phantaston*) is what produces an impression; for example, what is white, and what is cold, and everything able to move (*ho ti an dunētai kinein*) the soul, this is an impressor. (4.12.1-5 (39B))¹⁶

The faculty of *phantasia* is defined in A1a as affection revealing itself and what has made it, then illustrated by the paradigm case of seeing. Speaking generally, the work of *phantasia* is to receive information from the world, be impressed by it and produce particular impressions, or states of awareness in reaction to impressors that move the soul. Speaking more technically, *phantasia* is a state of awareness, in contrast to the raw sensory data before it reaches the mind. The language of *observing something white through sight* reflects this distinction, between the senses considered as arms of the octopus (*through sight*), and the awareness that takes place only at the *hēgemonikon* (*observing*).¹⁷ I will make use of this distinction in my analysis with the terms *sensing* and *sensation* to refer to what takes place in the arms of the octopus and the sense organs (what is *through sight* and *through seeing*), *perceiving* and *perception* to refer to the impression that takes place in the *hēgemonikon* (*when we observe*), and *sense-perception* for sensory impressions specifically, as opposed to non-sensory impressions “obtained through thought (*dianoia*), like those of the incorporeals and of other things acquired by reason” (D.L. 7.51 (39A4)).¹⁸ The difference between sensation and perception lies in the animal’s

¹⁶ This is part of a four-fold analysis comparing *phantasia* and its objects, impressors, with imagination and its objects, apparitions.

¹⁷ Galen, *PHP* 2.5.35-36 (de Lacy); Aetius 4.23.1 (53M); Hierocles 4.38-53 (53B5-9); cf. Long (1982, p.47-48, & 95-97) and Annas (1992, p.62-63, & 85) for comparison to the brain and central nervous system.

¹⁸ The account I give will proceed in terms of sensory impressions and often just in terms of vision, which are the paradigm cases of impression, but everything I say is meant to be applicable to non-sensory impressions as well, with the soul acting as corporeal agent to generate the *pathos* by being impressed in relation to (*epi*) things with a nature like the incorporeals (what is intelligible, vs. sensible), as reported in SE, *M.* 8.409 (27E).

awareness of the impressor's information: the motion that carries raw sensory data from the organ to the *hēgemonikon* is not something the animal is aware of; the imprint it makes on the *hēgemonikon*, however, must be a case of awareness — given the psychic nature of the *hēgemonikon* its affections can't fail to be cases of awareness. This is the force of defining *phantasia* in A1a as *pathos* revealing itself and what has made it; revealing is awareness. A1b then confirms that *phantasia* gives us cognitive access to the impressor that moved it, enabling us to say things about it. And A1c elucidates the reflexive dimension. I will take each in turn.

We can get a little clearer on our cognitive access to the impressor by looking at the mechanics of perception. The importance of impression understood as a corporeal *pathos* must not be underestimated; herein lies the transfer of information from impressor to soul.

B. They [the Stoics] say there are eight parts of soul: the five senses, the principles of procreation, the vocal faculty (*phonētikon*), and the reasoning faculty (*logistikon*) [i.e. the *hēgemonikon*]. Seeing is when the light between sight and what stands behind it (*tou hupokeimenou*) [the visual impressor, cf. A2] is stretched in the form of a cone ... The conical portion of air comes to be at the point of the eye, while the base is at what is seen; thus the thing seen is reported through the stretched air, like a walking stick. (DL 7.157 (53N+))

The comparison to a walking stick illustrates that air is no less direct and corporeal a conduit to the *hēgemonikon* than a walking stick; both are conveying their information by touching. So even though the object of sight does not itself touch the eye, seeing remains direct in that the object moves the eyes via the medium of air, and the eyes convey that very motion to the *hēgemonikon*. The air and the walking stick are conduits but not intermediaries; and so too the portions of *pneuma* extending between *hēgemonikon* and sense organs are conduits, but not intermediaries. Crucially, neither is any particular *phantasia* an intermediary between the world and the person perceiving it, because the *phantasia* is nothing but a temporary state of the commanding faculty receiving it.

So, when an impressor strikes the senses it makes an impact that imparts information about itself to the sense organs, and when that motion reaches the *hēgemonikon*, the animal is aware of the

impressor. The details of impact and transfer of information are hazy at best. However, we do know the Stoics embrace an analogy with wax being stamped and impressed to capture all the idiosyncrasies of a signet ring.¹⁹ Crucially, the Stoics are not comparing the *hēgemonikon* itself with wax, but rather comparing the wax's taking on of all the ring's idiosyncrasies with the *hēgemonikon*'s taking on all of *its* impressors' idiosyncrasies.²⁰ Thus the mechanism by which the wax and soul take on their impressors' qualities is not the explicit point of comparison, and their being similarly sensitive to their impressors does not entail that the *hēgemonikon* is itself like wax in any further respect, nor that impressions are pictorial or imagistic in any literal way. Although the details of the mechanism elude us, it is clear that there is a direct transfer of information when the impressor strikes the sense organs, creating a motion in the soul that carries the information imprinted on it to the *hēgemonikon*, where it becomes a *pathos* revealing what has made it.²¹

Now we will turn to the reflexive dimension of *phantasia* revealing itself as well its impressor, illustrated in A1c in analogy with light revealing itself and what is in its compass. What is salient in the analogy is that light and *phantasia* both serve to *reveal* things, themselves and their objects. In the case of light, revealing is obviously to be understood as illumination, making things visible, so at face value the Stoics have said that light makes itself visible alongside the objects it illuminates. In the case of impression, revealing is to be understood as making aware, giving cognitive access to; so the analogy taken on its own terms dictates just that *phantasia* makes an animal aware of itself alongside its impressor.²² Sextus Empiricus even makes it explicit that there are two things being grasped in *phantasia*: “one is the alteration itself, this is the *phantasia*; and the second is what made the alteration, and this is what is visible” (M. 7.162). What sense can we make of this self-awareness? To begin with, we can say with A.A. Long (1982, p.47) that having an impression involves awareness of oneself as the locus of that impression. This reflexive dimension of *phantasia* is a natural extension of

¹⁹ SE, M. 7.251 (40E3).

²⁰ As Chrysippus' resistance to overextending the analogy confirms, DL 7.50 (39A3).

²¹ Cf. Inwood (1984, p.161-64) and Sedley (1993, p.330-31) for confirmation that no gap is possible between body and soul.

²² Note that the causal direction is reversed in these two cases: light makes itself and the things it illuminates visible, but *phantasia* does not make the world intelligible; this difference does not undermine, but rather reinforces what is salient in the analogy.

an animal's self-perception present from birth.²³ Hierocles' *Elements of Ethics* is an important source of information about self-perception in the Stoic school, and here is how he puts it:

C. (1) Since an animal is a composite (*suntheton*) of body and soul, and (2) both of these are tangible (*thikta*) and impassible (*prosblēta*) and of course subject to resistance (*proseresei*), and also (3) blended through and through (*di' holōn kekratai*), and (4) one of them is a sensory faculty (*dunamis aisthētikon*) which itself undergoes movement in the way we have indicated, it is evident that an animal perceives itself continuously. For (5) by stretching out and relaxing, the soul strikes against (*prosballei*) all the body's parts, since it is blended with them all, and (6) in striking against the body it receives a striking in response. For the body, just like the soul, offers resistance (*antibatikon*); and the affection (*pathos*) that results (*apoteleitai*) is a joint pressure (*sunereistikon*) and resistance (*antereistikon*) in common (*homon*). (7) From the outermost parts, inclining in, it [sc. the *pathos*] travels ... to the commanding faculty (*hēgemonikon*), with the result that there is an apprehension (*antilēpsin*) of all the body's parts as well as the soul's. This is equivalent to the animal perceiving (*aisthanesthai*) itself. (4.38-53 (53B5-9))

Self-perception is defined as an affection in the soul, an inherently psychic *pathos* of the *hēgemonikon*, resulting from the reciprocal pressure of body and soul. The reciprocal nature of this *pathos* is what makes the impression reveal both itself and the impressor, two things. As Hierocles explains, (1) the body and soul are in contact; and (2) being corporeal, they can touch as agents, be impressed as patients, and in so doing offer resistance to each other. Thus (6) the soul strikes the body and thereby receives a blow in response, and the result is a single but joint event or activity shared by agent and patient. This much follows just from body and soul being in contact, as described in (1) and (2). The conclusion (7), that self-perception is *apprehension* of *all* the parts of body and soul, requires additional premises. Premises (3) and (5) establish blending as the kind of contact in question, which yields the *all* of the conclusion; if soul and body were not in contact by total blending, there would be awareness of only the parts that make contact (as in an ordinary case of perception, where the impressor is an external object of perception). And Hierocles confirms this

²³ Seneca, *Ep.* 121.6-15 (57B), Hierocles 1.34-9, 51-7, 2.1-9 (57C); cf. Long (1982 & 1991, p.107) on self-perception, and (1993, p.96) for a comparison of self-perception to proprioception.

reading (at 4.4-11) when he tells us that blending is responsible for the joint affect (*sumpatheia*) being *total* for both body and soul (but not for its being joint). Premise (4) then secures that the joint *pathos* is a case of *apprehension*, i.e. awareness; because the patient is a sensory faculty (psychic by nature), its *pathos* is *eo ipso* a case of awareness.²⁴ More from Hierocles:

D. For in general the apprehension (*antilepsis*) of something external is not completed (*sunteleitai*) apart from perception of itself; for in common with (*meta*) perception of what is white, it bears saying (*phere epein*) that we also perceive ourselves being whitened (*leukainomenōn*) ... with the result that since in all cases straight from birth the animal perceives something, and perception of something else is naturally conjoined (*sumpephuken*) with perception of itself, it is clear that from the start animals perceive themselves. (6.3-10; cf. 6.17-22)

This passage makes clear that an impression requires for its completion a perception of the animal itself as undergoing something — it is not an impression without a reflexive component. And because self-perception in the sense of continuous self-awareness is itself a state of the rational soul, i.e. the patient of the striking, that self-perception is conjoined with the incoming information from the impressor. Just as the psychic nature of the *hēgemonikon* means its affections are cases of awareness, so too the *hēgemonikon*'s state of continuous self-perception makes its impressions reflexive. The preposition *meta* indicates the closeness of this relationship, echoing the force of *sumpephuken*, literally *grown together*, and *sunereistikon* in C6. So, while the impression is itself a second object of awareness alongside its impressor, the reflexive story is rather more nuanced than this. In the logical analysis of impression, there is only one impressor; but in the physical and psychological analysis, the *hēgemonikon* is aware of two things jointly: the impressor in relation to the self that is perceiving it. The impressor is the agent and hence the proper impressor, but the *pathos* is a joint product (*sumpatheia*) of agent and patient: impressor and soul together. The reflexive role of impression revealing itself is thus not to be confused with the role of direct impressor.

Nevertheless, the self, i.e. the animal's constitution or articulation, *can* serve as an impressor in its own right; in that case, the reflexive element remains in play and the story is no different. The

²⁴ Thus Reed (2002) cannot be right in relegating the impression to a bodily precondition for awareness and thought, something we are aware of only indirectly via the impressor.

animal perceives itself as impressor, e.g. by flapping its wings and focusing on how its wings or legs work, and in so doing has an impression that is a joint product of impressor (self) and impression (also self).²⁵ It is aware of the self in relation to itself: this is *my* constitution, these are *my* parts and their functions...this is *my* impression. Thus there are two senses of self-perception in play for the Stoics. First, the continuous joint *pathos* that is a contributing cause to every impression; this is the reflexive element of *phantasia*. Second, self-perception with the self (the animal's present constitution and articulation) in the role of impressor, conjoined with the reflexive element. Note that neither sense of self-perception entails that the world is revealed through *phantasia* as an intermediate entity. The animal is directly aware of two things in relation to each other, not one via the other. Thus *phantasia* is best characterized as direct, reflexive awareness of the world.

***Phantasia logikē*, the rational impression**

Thus far I have avoided using the term *content*, usually speaking in terms of *information* that is conveyed, but it should be clear from my analysis that I take impressions to be quite content-ful. Indeed, insofar as an impression is a state of awareness, it is characterized precisely by its content — what is impressed. As we turn to the nature of the rational impression specifically, content will be front and center. The question now will be: in what does the content of the uniquely human rational impression consist? The short answer is that rational impressions have content expressible in words or language. What makes our utterances language, as opposed to mere vocal sound, is that they are significant (*sēmantikē*), and what is signified by the speaker and grasped by the rational hearer is a *lekton*.²⁶ As we will see, *lekta* are inextricable from rational impressions. The question then will be: what is the relation between rational impressions and *lekta*? We will begin with some passages describing the rational impression unique to humans.

E. Further, among impressions, there are those that are rational (*logikai*) and those that are irrational (*alogoi*); and rational are those of the rational animals, while irrational are those of the irrational. Thus rational impressions are called thoughts (*noēseis*), while the irrational ones don't happen to have a name. And there are those that are expert and those that are inexpert; at any rate (*goun*), a statue (*eikōn*) is viewed

²⁵ Hierocles 6.50-7.9, where the self is even described as an *aisthēton*, an object of sense-perception.

²⁶ SE, M. 8.11-12 (33B); DL 7.57 (33A).

one way by an expert and another way by a non-expert. (DL 7.51 (39A6-7); cf. Galen, *Def. med* (SVF 2.89))

F. For the impression arises first (*proēgeita*), and then thought, which has the power of speaking out (*eith' hē dianoia eklalētikē huparchousa*), expresses (*ekpherei*) in language (*logo(i)*) what it undergoes by (*ho paschei hupo*) the impression. (DL 7.49 (39A2/33D))

G. They [sc. the Stoics] say that the *lekton* is what subsists (*to huphistamenon*) according to (*kata*) a rational impression (*logikē phantasia*), and a rational impression is one in which the content of the impression (*to phantasthen*) is expressible (*esti parastēsai*) in language (*logo(i)*). (SE, *M.* 8.70 (33C); cf. DL 7.63 (33F))

This sequence of passages shows that what is characteristic of humans is the rationality of their impressions, and that impressions are rational when they are thoughts whose contents can be expressed in words or language. One might even frame these passages as a syllogism: rational impressions are thoughts (E); thought is linguistic and semantic (F); therefore *lekta* (the Stoics' linguistic and semantic entities) subsist according to thought, the rational impression (G). Now, this much is uncontroversial, but only because it does not yet take a stand on what it means for the *lekton* to subsist according to, or *kata*, the rational impression (cf. A1b). Everyone agrees that *lekta* are the expressible content of rational impressions, but there is an important disagreement as to whether the *lekta* give otherwise semantically empty impressions their propositional content, or whether *lekta* owe their propositional content to the rational impressions according to which they subsist. We can sloganize the debate by asking whether rational impressions are conduits or causes of *lekta*.²⁷

I avoided operating in terms of content because the term is laden with interpretive baggage, which it is now time to lay bare. The most basic presupposition about mental content is that it is propositional. This by itself says little, since everything hangs on what it means to be propositional; so let's accept it and see what comes out with different senses of *propositional*. One sense is practically axiomatic in the literature: to be propositional is to have content that is all and only from *lekta* construed as mind-independent entities, i.e. propositional content comes from thought

²⁷ I do not intend the word *cause* in the technical Stoic sense, which requires all causes to be capable of action and passion; by *cause* I mean source, or grounding body.

grasping propositions.²⁸ It is a corollary of this view that sense-perception reports only bare sensory qualities (e.g. colors, shapes and sounds), which are not part of the propositional content, on the model of the wooden horse in Plato's *Theaetetus* (184-186). If all content comes from *lekta*, whatever else there is (including the sensory information from the wooden horse), it doesn't count as content. It is also a corollary of the view, that sense-perceptions are objects or inputs for reason construed as something distinct; the mind that thinks is aware of *phantasiai* as its objects. Since reason is what distinguishes humans from animals, it must be some part of soul in addition to the faculty of impression they have in common.

This picture first took hold with William and Martha Kneale, Jan Łukasiewicz, and Benson Mates who brought much insight and attention to Stoic logic in the mid-20th century. The philosophical currency of propositions is established there by reference to Frege, Carnap, Quine, Church, and others.²⁹ The *lekton* is thereby taken to be an independent semantic entity that gives our subjective and private thoughts their objective semantic content. Call this the de-psychologizing orthodoxy. Michael Frede, who did much to establish this picture as the orthodoxy, takes the view that impressions are the *way* that a *lekton* is perceived, but of themselves have no propositional content (see Frede 1987, p.156). This assumption that all semantic content is from *lekta*, plays out in an ongoing debate over the status of non-rational impressions in animals and children. This debate is thought to be instructive on an Aristotelian-style assumption that since animals and humans have impression in common, their impressions must be the same (on the wooden horse model, corollary one) and reason must be something further receiving those impressions (corollary two). So if we can get clear on what goes in animals and children, we'll know about the added ingredient of reason as well.³⁰ The problem facing the orthodox view is that if all mental content is propositional and conceptual, then it looks like animals and children (since they are classified as irrational) cannot have mental contents, only the bare sensory qualities of the wooden horse; but these are not sufficient to explain complex animal behavior. Thus one solution is to say that content can be propositional without being conceptual, in which case children and animals can have articulable mental contents

²⁸ Cf. Brittain (2002) as the notable exception to Annas (1992), Barnes (1993, 1999), Caston (1999, unpublished), Frede (1987), Inwood (1985), Lesses (1998), Mates (1961), Sedley (1993), and Sorabji (1990).

²⁹ Mates (1961, p.19-26).

³⁰ Cf. Brittain (2002, p.256-57) and Lesses (1998, p.1-3) for perspicuous summaries of the issues.

sufficient to explain behavior without having to grasp that content.³¹ This is an unfortunate choice: either animals and children have mental content without being able to grasp it, or they have no mental content at all. My suggestion is that this is a false dichotomy resting on the mistaken axiom and corollaries of the de-psychologizing orthodoxy. So, I propose to suspend the axiom that semantic content only comes from *lekta* and see where it leads when we take our inquiry to the texts and read the Stoics on their own terms. We will begin with Sextus.

H. They say that the human does not differ from irrational animals in respect of uttered speech (*prophoriko(i) logo(i)*) (for crows and parrots and jays utter articulate sounds), but in respect of internal speech (*endiatheto(i)*), nor merely by the simple impression (for these too have impressions) but by the transitive (*metabatikē(i)*) and synthetic (*sunthetikē(i)*) impression. Wherefore (*dioper*), having the conception of implication (*akolouthias ennoian exōn*), straightaway one also grasps the thought of a sign, through implication; for, that is, the sign itself is such: “if this, then that.” Therefore the fact that there are signs also (*to kai sēmeion huparchein*) follows from (*hepetai*) the nature and constitution (*kataskenē(i)*) of the human being. (SE, *M.* 8.275-6 (53T); cf. *M.* 8.285, *PH* 1.65)

Sextus reports that humans differ from animals in two ways: internal speech and rational impressions. First, it’s not the actual proffering of speech that makes us different from animals, but *endiathetos logos*, which we can think of as the ability to make statements to oneself.³² This gap between impression and utterance where internal discourse takes place is what gives us the uniquely human control over assent and impulse, in contrast to blue jays that utter articulate cries as an automatic response to their impressions.³³ Origen confirms this picture when he reports that the rational animal “has reason that passes judgment on impressions (*logon...ton krinonta tas phantasias*), rejecting some of these and accepting others, in order that the animal may be guided according to them [sc. those they accept]” (*Princ.* 3.1.3 (53A5); cf. Calcidius 220 (53G)). Passing judgment on

³¹ As Caston (unpublished) and Sorabji (1990) suggest; note here the seeds of epistemic externalism, which is a related orthodoxy established by Annas (1990), Frede (1987), Striker (1974); cf. Nawar (2014) and Perin (2005) for recent defenses of internalism.

³² As Long (1971, p.88) puts it; cf. Gourinat (2013) for additional texts and valuable cautions against assimilating Stoic *endiathetos logos* to the Platonic notion more akin to internal dialogue than declamation (*diexodos*).

³³ This point may be put either in terms of denying assent to animals and introducing it only with humans, or granting animals assent but calling it voluntary only with humans; cf. Brittain (2002, p.257, n. 10).

impressions does not signal that the mind takes impressions as its objects on a wooden horse model, but rather that there is a gap between perception and assent where reflection and deliberation take place. This is self-perception in the second sense described above, not merely reflexive but with the self in the role of impressor. Indeed, examination of our impressions is the most important kind of self-perception because it is for the sake of evaluating the way we see the world, analyzing our seeings as before owning them with our assent. In this gap we have the opportunity to evaluate and examine our impressions before passing judgment, choosing the *lekton* we assent to and becoming responsible for the resulting impulse and action. Epictetus calls it *parakolouthia* and even personifies the process for rhetorical effect: “Wait for me a bit, *phantasia*; let me see who you are and what are about, let me test you” (*Diss.* 2.18.24-6). Given this gap between impression and assent, there must be something about the rational impression that makes it available for this kind of examination prior to assenting to a *lekton*.

And this is precisely the other thing differentiating us from animals: because impressions are rational they can be examined and evaluated. Sextus explains that our impressions are transitive, literally moving from one place to another (*metabatikē*), and constructive or compositional (*synthetikē*). We can capture this point by saying they are discursive: being *metabatikē* signals that rational impressions are inferential, and being *synthetikē* signals that they are compositional — they are seeings as (as I will put it).³⁴ And this is to say that rational impressions are conceptual and thus propositional. To see something as F is to predicate a concept of it; and since Stoic concepts are analyzed as conditionals, seeing as is inherently inferential.³⁵ The rational impression, being discursive, thus looks quite content-ful, with precisely the kind of content whose implications can be evaluated and selected for assent or rejection. Here we see how the rational impression is at the heart of Stoic moral psychology, as the foundation of *oikeiosis* and *prohairesis*, and the lynchpin of their compatibilist ethics, as the one thing in the cosmos over which we have control. So, to summarize, the content of the rational impression is inherently inferential, conceptual, semantic, and linguistic — i.e. propositional.³⁶ Thus, with the benefit of passage H, we see an alternative sense of *propositional* emerging, which does not make reference to propositions grasped as independent

³⁴ As Bury (1935) translates, they are *transitive* and *constructive*; cf. also Long (1971, p.87 and n. 54). For synthesis as combination, see DL 7.53; SE, *M.* 8.60; Cicero, *Fin.* 3.33-34 (60D)

³⁵ SE, *M.* 11.8-11 (30I); this paraphrasing move is how the Stoics eliminate concepts from the ontology (cf. Caston (1999)).

³⁶ I will now use these terms interchangeably — with the axiom suspended, priority among them is not material.

objects of thought.³⁷ We see an alternative axiom emerging as well: the content of the rational impression is in the impression. That's why they are called thoughts (E).

With the help of Cicero's *Acad.* 2.21, we can also see an alternative to the first corollary, the wooden horse model of perception. This passage has been of interest in the animal minds debate, as a sort of loophole to ascribe enough content to animals to account for their behavior without giving them full-fledged rationality. But with the axiom that mental content comes all and only from *lekta* suspended, there is no reason to seek this loophole. Denying *lekta* to animals need not deny them any mental content whatsoever, nor does it give any reason to think that sense-impressions merely provide raw sensory data.

I. Those characteristics that belong to those things we say are perceived (*percipi*) by the senses (*sensibus*) are equally characteristic of that further set of things said to be perceived not by the senses themselves (*ipsis*) but by them in a certain respect (*quodam modo*), e.g. "That is white," "This is sweet," "That is melodious," "This is fragrant," "This is bitter." We have comprehension (*tenemus comprehensa*) of these by the mind now (*animo iam*), not the senses. Next (*deinceps*), "That is a horse," "That is a dog." The rest of the series follows next, connecting greater things that are as if to encompass a complete comprehension of things: "If it is a human, it is a mortal, rational animal." From this class [sc. of things perceived by the mind] conceptions (*notitiae*) of things are imprinted (*imprimuntur*) on us, without which there can be no understanding (*intellegi*) nor discussion (*disputari*) of anything (*quicquam*). (Cicero, *Acad.* 2.21 (39C))

Those things perceived by the senses themselves are colors, tastes and sounds et al. that get communicated to the soul by the sense organs; this is the raw sensory data. These colors, tastes and sounds are *equally characteristic of*, i.e. still present when those things are registered by the senses *in a certain respect*, i.e. predicatively, *as* white, sweet or melodious. The idea here is that the sensory content delivered by the arms of the octopus persists and in that respect is equally characteristic of the content of the impression when it strikes the *bēgemonikon* and is seen as F. The force of saying these are comprehended by the mind *now* is to signal the awareness that takes place once the sensory

³⁷ I take this sense to be akin to Brittain (2002) and Lesses (1998).

impact reaches the *bēgemonikon* from the arms of the octopus — the mind, but not the walking stick will be aware of the impressor as F. So much is confirmed by Sextus: “for what grasps the truth in those things underlying (*hupokeimenois*) [sc. the impressors, A1b] must not only be moved in a white manner (*leukantikōs*) or a sweet manner (*glukantikōs*), but also be led (*achthēnai*) to an impression of such a thing that “This is white” and “This is sweet”” (*M.* 7.344, cf. 7.293). Sextus goes on to confirm that this is no longer the job of sense because sense grasps only color, flavor and sound, but cannot grasp “This is white.” Thus I take the idea that the mind grasps what the senses offer *in a certain respect* to indicate that rational impressions are inherently conceptual, echoing Sextus’ description of them as synthetic and inferential. I do not find the wooden horse model in this passage, taking impressions to report only bare sensory qualities to thought as something distinct. Rather, taking the testimony that rational impressions are thoughts (E) at face value, I find the alternative corollary that impressions are inherently conceptual states of mind, which I have sloganized as: *all seeing is seeing as*.

An alternative to the second corollary that mind, or thought is something distinct that takes impressions as its inputs, is also discernible in Cicero’s testimony. This passage is in fact describing the Stoics’ developmental account of rationality, according to which reason is constituted by the concepts we acquire through experience.³⁸ For the Stoics, humans have *logos*, or reason, from birth; it is the faculty or capacity for rationality, which develops gradually through our interactions with the world. The Stoics are akin to modern empiricists in this regard, starting us with a *tabula rasa* “fit for writing upon,” and equating our rationality with the concepts we write on it.³⁹ The initial development of rationality consists in our basic concept acquisition, first of preconceptions that arise naturally from the world, and then conceptions, which are a function of study, art and convention.⁴⁰ Thus, in passage I we begin to get rationalized with basic sensory concepts like white, sweet, melodious, fragrant, and bitter; next we move to kinds like horse and dog. Then we move from basic predication to connecting our concepts together and appreciating their inferential import, as in: *If something is a human, then it is a mortal, rational animal*. The human soul is considered rational once it has acquired a complete stock of concepts from experience, and a proper grasp of their

³⁸ Galen, *PHP* 5.2.49, 5.3.1 (53V).

³⁹ Aetius 4.11.1-4 (39E); cf. Long (1982, p.51) for whom *logos* is not one faculty among others, but the *mode* of the whole soul’s operation.

⁴⁰ I am in agreement with Sandbach (1930, contra Bonhoffer), that *prolēpseis* are not innate ideas; cf. Dyson for a more recent defense of such Platonizing.

inferential import. Only then is a person considered to have voice, i.e. to be a reliable language user who understands the meanings of her words and is responsible for her actions. Only then do our impressions become thoughts.

It is important to appreciate the full force of this point, that impression *are* thoughts. I said above that the psychic nature of the *hēgemonikon* (the kind of *poion* that it is) makes the impressor's imprint result in a case of awareness, a *pathos* that reveals itself and its cause. Further, that the state of continuous self-perception (the *poion pōs echon*) makes every impression reflexive. Now, by that same token, we can appreciate that the rationalized state of the human *hēgemonikon* makes the *pathos* propositional in addition. The habituated state of the *hēgemonikon* (*pōs echon*) determines how the incoming information is conceived, i.e. how the patient is affected. And the way the patient is affected is what is impressed (*to phantasthen*), i.e. the content of the rational impression that is expressible in words. So, in answer to the first question posed in this section, in what does the content of the rational impression consist, the answer is this: incoming information from the impressor, as it is conceived. This is not two steps or two components, but one. Another way to put my point is to say that I reject the distinction between *character* and *content*; the content of an impression just is the incoming information, the way it is conceived.

This idea that the state or disposition of a person's soul determines the content of the rational impression is confirmed by the Stoic account of expertise. Earlier, in passage E, rational impressions were subdivided into expert and inexpert. Let's take this at face value, and ask what it means for a rational impression to be expert. We know that the Stoics explicitly categorize expertise (e.g. having the art of medicine or, ideally, the art of life) as a tenor (*hexis*) of soul, and so a *pōs echon*. Further, that "expertise is a system [developed] out of (*ek*) cognitions (*katalēpseōn*) in joint training (*sungegumnasmenōn*) relative to some goal useful in life" (Olympiodorus, *In Plat. Gorg.* 12.1 (42A)).⁴¹ To be an expert, then, is to have developed one's rationality with care and attention to some goal. Just as basic human rationality is constituted by the development of our preconceptions and conceptions from our interactions with the world, so expertise is just a further habituation or training of the *hēgemonikon* with a certain end in mind, say carpentry, medicine, or virtue (the art of life). As the preposition *ek* signals, expertise is not a new ingredient or part of soul, but soul itself

⁴¹ Cf. also Stobaeus 2.73,1-13 (60J); Cicero, *Acad.* 2.22 (42B); Plutarch, *Virt. mor.* 440E-441D (61B).

disposed in a certain way — *pneuma* that is maximally sensitive to the world’s maximal intelligibility and detail, just as the comparison with wax dictates.

Julia Annas finds it puzzling that the impression itself is characterized as expert or inexperienced, and suggests an interpretive dilemma.⁴² On the first model, the expert and the non-expert have the same *phantasiai* with the same content at step one, but assent to different *lekta* at step two because they only take in or accept part of the information contained in the impression. On this picture, the information contained in the *phantasia* is raw sensory data (on the wooden horse model) and step two marks the introduction of conceptual or propositional content. On the second model, the expert and inexperienced have different *phantasiai* with different content, but there is no distinction to be made between perception and assent, only a distinction between the striking of the sense organ (step zero) and what happens at the *hēgemonikon* (step one = step two). Annas, stumped, finds no reason to prefer either horn of the dilemma. But notice that the dichotomy rests on the orthodox assumption that the *lekton* assented to contains the content of the *phantasia*. If *phantasiai* only have content derivatively in virtue of grasping an external, independent *lekton*, experts and inexperienced can only differ in these two ways: either they have the same raw, non-conceptual data (same *phantasiai*) and assent subsequently to different *lekta*, or they have different *phantasiai* with different conceptual content and *eo ipso* assent to different *lekta*. With the orthodoxy suspended, however, there is no reason to accept Annas’ dichotomy.

Rather, a natural alternative emerges that takes the expert and inexperienced to have different *phantasiai* with different content at step one, and sees assent (step two) as a distinct phase of cognition on the other side of internal discourse. The world in all its specificity makes a causal impact (*tuposis*) on our sensory apparatus (step zero); this much is the same in everyone, expert and inexperienced alike (assuming comparable eyesight, e.g. neither needs glasses). Then, in analogy with the walking stick, the *tuposis* imprinted with the impressor’s information travels up the arms of the octopus to the *hēgemonikon*, where it becomes a *phantasia*. This is step one, and it is not the same in the expert and inexperienced, because their souls are differently habituated and so they receive the information differently. An expert soul is sensitive to more of the incoming information, capable of seeing more than the novice. When an arborist looks at a certain tree, she sees a silver birch at a particular stage of its life,

⁴² 1992, p.82-83.

in some determinate state of health, etc. I see a tree. When an artist looks at a painting, she sees scale, composition, brush strokes, media, and technique, reading the creative process off the canvas. I see a painting. We see the same painting, and we have the same incoming sensory data, but we do not see it the same way. As Cicero puts it just before telling us that things are perceived by the senses *in a certain respect* (*Acad.* 2.20): “How many things painters see in shadows and in the foreground which we do not see!” The content of an expert’s impression (the expert’s seeing as) is different from the non-expert’s because the expert soul is habituated by experience and art, a collection of inferential conceptions and maximal sensitivity to detail. There is thus a wealth of content in the expert’s rational impression, which cannot be captured by any one simple *lekton*. This is why impressions are neither objects of thought for a separate mind (corollary 2) nor reporters of mere sensory data on a wooden horse model (corollary 1), but thoughts about their impressor—thick with conceptual and inferential content resulting from the impressor making an impact on the *hēgemonikon*.⁴³

Phantasia logikē, source of lekta

We now turn to the second question raised above, what is the relation between the rational impression and the *lekton*? What does the preposition *kata* convey when we are told that the *lekton* subsists *according to* the rational impression (A1b, F)? The order of explanation in passages F and G already suggests that *lekta* depend on the rational impression: (F) says, first we have an impression, then we express its content (by uttering *lekta*);⁴⁴ (G) says, *lekta* subsist according to the rational impression, because the rational impression has the content to give them their subsistence.⁴⁵ More concretely, in passage H after telling us that humans have internal discourse and rational impressions, Sextus goes on to infer (and reiterate at 8.285) that the existence of conditionals follows from the human nature and constitution. Given that conditionals are composed of *lekta*, this conclusion amounts to an explicit claim that *lekta* depend on rational impressions as prior

⁴³ Cf. Long (1991, p.109-10) who speaks of rational impressions as thick with content and potential judgments; Caston (unpublished) has recently called into question the thin notion of content and passive model of mind, but he remains committed to the orthodox axiom and thus differs only in requiring more propositions to imbue the impression with its full content

⁴⁴ This priority is not merely temporal; immediate context (not quoted) shows that this order explains the priority of rational impression to assent, knowledge and reasoning.

⁴⁵ Others in the current minority that favors mind-dependence include Barnouw (2002), Imbert (1978), Long (1971, 1991, 1999, 2006), and Nuchelmans (1973).

semantically (since they have conceptual content of themselves) and ontologically (the fact that there are conditionals follows from the rational impression).

We can add to this now the explicit testimony that *lekta* arise out of (*ek*),⁴⁶ i.e. from, and in consequence (*parhuphistamenon*)⁴⁷ of the rational impression. Further, Sextus tells us at *M.* 8.80 that for the Stoics speaking (*legein*) is uttering voice that signifies the subject matter in mind (*to tēn tou nooumenou pragmatos semantikē prophēsthai phonēn*). Likewise, Diogenes reports that “language is semantic voice (*phonē sēmantikē*) sent forth from thought (*ekpempomenē apo dianoias*)” (DL 7.56; cf. 7.55 (33H+)). Galen also lays bare the Stoic commitment to the dependence of *lekta* on thought, quoting Zeno, Diogenes of Babylon, and Chrysippus on this point: mind is the source of language. Following is the quote he attributes to Chrysippus, telling us explicitly, that words receive their meaning from thought.

J. [16] “It is reasonable (*eulogon*) that that in which (*eis ho*) the meanings at that point (*hai en touto(i) sēmasiai*) come to be and out of which discourse (*logos*) comes to be, is the ruling (*kuriouon*) part of soul. For the source (*pēgē*) of [internal] discourse (*logos*) is none other than thought (*dianoias*), and the source of voice (*phōnēs*) none other than [internal] discourse, and [i.e.] (*kai*) on the whole, simply, the source of voice is none other than the ruling part of soul ... [18] For on the whole, whence (*hothen*) discourse (*logos*) issues must be where (*ekeise*) reasoning (*dialogismos*), thinkings (*dinanoeseis*) and preparations (*meletas*) of linguistic expressions (*rēseiōn*) come to be, just as I said. [19] And these things clearly come to be around the heart, both voice and [public] discourse issuing from the heart through the windpipe.” (Galen, *PHP* 2.5.16-20)⁴⁸

Here is a breakdown of the passage: (16) the commanding faculty is the where meanings and discourse (*logos*) come to be. Why? First, because internal discourse has its source in thought, and

⁴⁶ DL 7.43; Barnes (1993, p.56) does cop to the “lameness” of dismissing this piece of testimony as generally confused in order to work around the obvious language of dependence.

⁴⁷ SE, *M.* 8.11-12 (33B); Stryanous *In Ar. meta.* 105,25-30; Lloyd (1985) has argued nicely that *parhuphistamenon*, which is also used to describe the relation of the incorporeal, place, to its occupying body, signals strong dependence, a parasitic relation between the *lekton* and rational impression.

⁴⁸ Reading *en touto(i)* adverbially in the sense of *at that point in time/place* (LSJ IV), corresponding to *ensēmainesthai* in 20, confirmed by *ekeithen* (thence) in 20, and *hothen* in 18; attributive position signals that they become semantic at that very point; I am grateful to David Crane for discussion of this passage.

voice has its source in internal discourse; therefore (simply put) voice comes from the *bēgemonikon* (where thought takes place).⁴⁹ (18) Second, because the source of discourse *must be* (i.e. on principle) the place of reasoning and thinking, and where words are imbued with meaning. Diogenes of Babylon confirms: “discourse is sent forth having been imprinted (*ensesēmasmenon*) and in a way stamped (*hoion ek tetupōmenon*) by conceptions in the mind” (Galen, *PHP* 2.5.12). Thus we see that the mind-dependence of *lekta* is attested by a wide variety of sources: a hostile skeptic, neutral doxographer, fussy Platonizing physician, and now in a grammatical context by Ammonius, head of the neoplatonist school in Alexandria:

K. The Stoics reply [to the peripatetic] that the nominative case itself has fallen (*peptōken*) from thought (*apo noēmatos*), which is in the soul. For when we wish to reveal (*dēlōsai*) the thought of Socrates that we have in ourselves, we utter (*propherometha*) the name Socrates [i.e. Socrates in the nominative case]. Therefore, just as a pen is said both to have fallen and to have its fall upright if it is released from above and sticks upright, so we claim that the nominative case [literally 'the direct case'] falls from thought (*apo tēs ennoias*), but is upright because it is the archetype of meaningful utterance (*tēs kata tēn ekphonēsin prophoras*). (*In Ar. De int.* 43,9-15 (33K))⁵⁰

Jonathan Barnes has objected to taking this (and a plethora of other texts connecting *lekta* with thoughts) as evidence of Stoic semantic theory. He urges that passage K expresses no more than the commonplace that producing someone’s name is a good way of telling someone who you are thinking about, and cautions that “[e]ven if Ammonius in this passage is referring to the Old Stoa (which is not clear), and even if he is reporting Stoic views with fidelity (which cannot be taken for granted), nevertheless his report has nothing to do with any theory of meaning. In general, we should not read philosophical theories into platitudes” (Barnes 1993, p. 54). As a founder of the de-psychologizing orthodoxy, Barnes’ dogma should be taken with a grain of salt. It’s doubtful that

⁴⁹ I disambiguate *logos* as *internal* or *external*, i.e. *public*, discourse based on context: the salient contrast is between discourse arising in thought, on the one hand, and voice on the other; since voice, which is clearly public, has its source in discourse — it must be some other kind, namely internal discourse; therefore, on the assumption that being a source is transitive, the source of voice is the commanding faculty, where thoughts happen meanings come to be.

⁵⁰ Translation Long & Sedley with modifications; for argument that *ptoseis* should be considered elements of *lekta*, alongside predicates, see M. Frede (1978); cf. Long (1971) for the opposite position.

Ammonius spends his time rehearsing platitudes rather than theory. Further, his caution about platitudes cuts both ways, since it is equally important that we not allow philosophical theories to upend platitudes, in this case to upend the wealth of clear textual evidence attesting to the mind-dependence of *lekta*.

For example, Barnes writes off Galen's testimony as a physiological comment about the windpipe, which says nothing about words receiving their meaning from thought; then he adds, even if we do have to read this evidence as establishing that thinking causes speaking, it's obviously false that speech is caused by thought because we sometimes speak unreflectively (i.e. without thinking). But the fact that we sometimes speak unreflectively is hardly a counterexample to the general claim that human voice is made semantic by thought. And Barnes' dismissal of Sextus' testimony at 8.80 as telling us that voice is significant because the *pragma* it has in mind is just a *lekton* is circular: presupposing that rational impressions have semantic content only because they grasp independent *lekta*. The scarcity of our textual evidence makes every passage precious, so Barnes' summary dismissal of a dozen different passages connecting *lekta* with thoughts is not to be taken lightly. Tossing so much evidence aside is a steep price to pay for any interpretation.⁵¹ However, my point is not just that the cost is too high, but that the expense is artificial. With the axiom suspended, there is no need to dismiss all this textual evidence, or to fall on the horns of false dichotomies.

Conclusion

Taken on its own terms, the Stoic rational impression reveals a rich philosophy of mind driven by content. The rational impression is a state of the rational mind, the human *hēgemonikon* rationalized by experience. It gives us direct cognitive access to the world (as the image of the walking stick suggests), conjoined with self-perception. Being an affection of rational soul, it is inherently propositional and thick with content for internal discourse. We can now see how many ways rational impressions are at the heart of Stoic philosophy of mind. First, to have a mind just is to have rational impressions; Stoic psychology is entirely monistic and cognitive through and through, paving the way to an austere Socratic intellectualism. Second, to be subject to internal discourse is

⁵¹ And the nonchalance of Barnes' approach hardly makes the cost easier to bear; after summarily dismissing five different texts unfriendly to his view, he offers no more defense than the following imaginary exchange in a footnote: "So we should discard most of the texts which inform us about Stoic sayables?" -Yes. - 'Surely that is not methodologically defensible?' -Yes; it is."

to be able to engage in the most important kind of self-perception, *parakolouthēsis*: the ability to put the impressor in the role of impression to see what it tells us about ourselves. Third, for rational impressions to be subject to internal discourse is also to have control over our assents, actions and state of character, and thus to have both moral responsibility and hope for moral improvement; here we find the famous doctrine of *oikeiosis*. Further, the fact that rational impressions are direct and reflexive states of awareness has implications for Stoic epistemology; it will be clear already to the initiated that my account of rational impressions will psychologize the cataleptic impression, in contrast to externalist readings that are part and parcel of the orthodoxy I have been describing. Finally, because rational impressions are thick with propositional content, they are the source of *lekta*: causes not conduits. Thus we can see how the Stoic philosophy of mind reaches across ethics, epistemology and into logic. To define *logikē phantasia* as an impression whose content can be expressed in words is to get to the very heart of the human mind: we are above all the language animal, and *lekta* are the currency of agency, knowledge and rationality.⁵²

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