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Impulse and Animal Action in Stoic Psychology

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There is contradictory evidence on the cause of impulse, ὀρμή, in Stoic psychology. Sources clearly indicate that impulse cannot occur without assent, συγκατάθεσις (Plut. De Stoic. rep. 1057A = SVF 3.175) and that impulses are assents (Stob. Ecl. 2.88.1-6 = SVF 3.171). But other sources indicate that the actual cause of impulse is not assent but impression, φαντασία (Stob. Ecl. 2.86.17-18 = SVF 3.169), “They (the Stoics) say that what moves an impulse is nothing other than an horneic impression of something that is self-evidently appropriate.” 1 Some texts openly suggest that impulse may precede assent (Plut. Adv. Col. 1122A-B; Sen. Ep. 113.18 = SVF 3.169; Cic. De fato 40 = SVF 2.974, Origen De princ. 3.4 = SVF 2.988).

At stake is the Stoic explanation of a familiar problem: one sees something tempting, and feels “attracted” toward it, then resolves to resist the temptation. That is, human experience suggests that choice involves more than deliberation in propositional form; one feels a sort of pull toward potential objects of choice before a decision is reached. Since yielding to this “pull” can result in improper actions, the Stoic view of the cause of passion is involved. Moreover, if there are drives within us that “attract” us to things, the issue of dualism also comes into play.

One solution to the apparent conflict in the evidence is to posit the existence of a “preliminary” impulse, before a “final” impulse is approved by assent. Ioppolo argues that Chrysippus altered Zeno’s position in which preliminary impulse precedes assent.2 Inwood argues that the move to create preliminary impulse comes later, in response to pressures from the Skeptical Academy (supra n.1 179), and he takes a firm stance against preliminary impulse in the old Stoa, “No orthodox Stoic could say that an impulse could occur in an adult human either before or independently of an assent” (ibid. 176). I shall set out the evidence that shows impulse preceding assent, my conclusion from which is that impulse does precede assent even for the old Stoa, though assent has final control over it. In fact the evidence is consistent when one considers a sufficiently complex model of action. The evidence also suggests that the “preliminary passions”, προπάθεια, are instances of this kind of impulse, and that these were recognized as contributing factors to passion.

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1 τὸ δὲ κινοῦν τὴν ὀρμήν σοδὲν ἔτερον εἰμι λέγουσιν ἀλλ’ ἡ φαντασίαν ὁμηρικήν τῷ καθήκοντος αὐτόθεν. I dissent from Long and Sedley’s translation The Hellenistic Philosophers (Cambridge 1987) 1.317, 2.318 and follow more closely Inwood, Ethics and Human Action in Ancient Stoicism (Cambridge 1985) 224.
I. Evidence for the Order of Impulse and Assent

Ioppolo sets out the evidence suggesting that impulse precedes assent ([supra n.2] 458-61). Plutarch reports (Adv. Col. 1122A-B) the substance of the apraxia-debate between Zeno and Arcesilaus. Having argued that the criterion of judgment, φαντασία καταληπτική, (and thus the possibility of assent) does not exist, Arcesilaus argues for the viability of living by suspension of judgment, ἐποχή, even on Stoic principles:

The soul has three movements: impression, impulse and assent. The movement of impression we could not remove, even if we wanted to; rather, as soon as we encounter things, we are necessarily stamped and affected by them. The movement of impulse, when roused to action toward appropriate things by impression, moves a person, since a kind of turn of the scale and inclination occur in the hegemonikon. So those who suspend judgment about everything do not remove this, but at the prompting of nature use impulse, which leads them towards what appears appropriate.3

Arcesilaus would not have been able to sustain the argument that impulse can occur without assent had the Stoa clearly maintained that assent precedes impulse. But in fact the citation from Stobaeus (supra n.1) suggests they probably did not, and that Arcesilaus’ account makes legitimate use of Stoic principles. Ioppolo argues that had assent preceded impulse in Zeno’s psychology of action, Arcesilaus’ argument would not have solved the apraxia-argument (459). The order of action suggested above is impression, impulse, assent, action. This order is also affirmed by Seneca (Ep. 113.18 = SVF 3.169):

Every rational animal does nothing unless first it has been aroused by the impression of something, and then has had an impulse, and then assent has confirmed this impulse. What this assent is, I shall explain. “It is appropriate that I walk”; then finally I walk, whenever I have said this to myself and approved this opinion of mine.4

This order is also implied in a controversial text from Cicero De fato 40. In the midst of reporting Chrysippus’ seminal doctrine that assent gives man freedom from necessity, Cicero inserts an argument attributed only to the Stoics generally. He cites first a list of philosophers who held that all things happen by fate, then those who deny fate, and says that Chrysippus wished to act

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3 τριῶν περὶ τὴν ψυχήν κινημάτων ὄντων, φανταστικὸ καὶ ὀρμητικὸ καὶ συγκαταθετικὸ, τὸ μὲν φανταστικὸν οὐδὲ βουλομένων ἀνελεῖν ἔστω, ἀλλὰ ἀνάγκη προεκτυγχάνωσιν τὸς πράγμασι τόποθθαί καὶ πάσχειν ὑπ᾿ αὐτῶν, τὸ δε ὀρμητικὸν ἑγερόμενον ὑπὸ τοῦ φανταστικοῦ πρὸς τὰ ὑικεῖα πρακτικῶς καὶ τὸν ἄφθονον, οὗν ῥῆσιν ἐν τῷ ἡγεμονικῷ καὶ νεότερῳ γνωστικῷ. οὐδὲ τοῦτ οὖν ἀναφέρον τι περὶ πάντων ἑπέγνωσι, ἀλλὰ γράφεται τῇ ὀρμής φυσικῆς ἀγοράς πρὸς τὸ φανταστικοῦ ὑικεῖον. 4 Omne rationale animal nihil agit, nisi primum specie alicuius rei irritatum est, deinde impetum cepit, deinde adensio confirmavit hunc impetum. Quid sit adensio, dicam. Oportet me ambulare: tunc dementem ambulo, cum hoc mihi dixerit et adprobavi hanc opinionem meam.
as "honorary arbiter" of the dispute, but addressed himself to the fatalists. Two sentences later, the putatively Stoic argument follows:

But those (sc. the Stoics) who dissent from them (sc. the fatalists) freed assents from fate and denied, if fate is applicable to assents, that necessity can be removed from them; and these used to argue as follows, "if all things happen by fate, all things happen by an antecedent cause; and if impulse, then also the things that follow impulse, therefore also assents; but if the cause of impulse is not in our power, not even impulse itself is in our power; and if this is so, not even those things that are brought about by impulse are in our power; therefore neither assents nor actions are in our power. From this it follows that neither praise nor blame nor rewards nor punishments are just." And since this is specious, they hold one may confidently conclude that not all the things that come to pass happen by fate. Moreover Chrysippus... distinguished kinds of causes...5

Two of the three texts adduced to refute this body of evidence by Inwood (supra n.1 46, 178 noted by Ioppolo supra n.2 459 n.15) come through Antiochus, the other through Plutarch. The first is Cicero Luc. 24-25 (SVF 2.116):

Moreover the former is point is obvious, that a starting point must be established for wisdom to follow when it begins to do something; and that starting point is what accords with nature. For otherwise impulse (our name for ὦρμή), by which we are impelled to act and seek what has been presented, cannot be set in motion. But that which moves it must first be presented, and then believed; and this cannot happen if the impression cannot be discerned from a false one. And how can the soul be moved to impulse if it is not perceived whether what is presented accords with nature or the opposite?6

Plutarch tries to prove Stoic inconsistency in the claim that assent is necessary for action (De Stoic rep. 1057A = SVF 3.177):

Indeed, what was the subject most argued by Chrysippus himself and Antipater in their debates with the Academics? That neither action nor impulse occur

5 qui autem ab iis dissentiebant, fato adsensiones liberabant negabantque fato adsensionis adhibito necessitatem ab his posse removeri; iique ita disserebant: "si omnia fato fiunt, omnia fiunt causa antecedente; et si adpetitus, illa etiam quae adpetitum securunt, ergo etiam adsensiones; at, si causa adpetitus non est sita in nobis, ne ipse quidem adpetitus est in nostra potestate; quod si ita est, ne illa quidem quae adpetitum efficiuntur sunt sita in nobis; non sunt igitur neque adsensiones neque actiones in nostra potestate. ex quo efficitur ut nec laudationes iustae sint nec vituperationes nec honores nec supplicia." quod cum vitiosum sit, probabiliter conclusi putant non omnia fato fieri quaecumque fiat. Chrysippus autem...causarum gener distinguat...

6 Atque etiam illud perspicuum est, constituit necessae esse initiun quod sapientia cum quid agere incipiat sequatur, idque initium esse naturae accommodatum. Nam aliter adpetitio (eam enim volumus esse ὦρμίν), qua ad agendum impellimur et id adpetimus quod est visum, moveri non potest; illud autem quod movet prius oportet videre, eique credi, quod fieri non potest si id quod visum erit discerni non poterit a falso; quo modo autem moveri animus ad adpetendum potest si id quod videtur non percipitur accommodatum ne naturae sit alienum?
without assent; rather that those argue speciously and from empty hypotheses who think that when an appropriate impression is present, action or impulse occur without yielding or assenting.⁷

In the argument that follows, Chrysippus is said to hold that god and the wise man create false impressions to which one must not respond with assent or yielding, but only impulse. This would create an unassented action, which the Stoics would not admit (Inwood 85-86).

The other passage from Antiochus continues from the De fato (41-43 = SVF 2.974):

And so he meets that argument which I just concluded as follows: if all things happen by fate it does indeed follow that all things happen by antecedent causes, but not by principal and perfect causes, rather antecedent and proximate causes. And if these themselves do not in our power it does not follow that not even impulse is in our power. But this would follow if we said that all things happen by perfect and principal causes, with the result that, since these causes are not in our power, not even impulse would be in our power...

As to the fact that assents occur by antecedent causes, he says that he can easily explain the meaning of this. For although assent cannot occur unless roused by impression, nevertheless since it has impression as its proximate cause and not its principal cause, it can be explained in the way in which we have been discussing for some time now, just as Chrysippus wishes. It is not the case that the assent can occur without being stimulated by a force outside of itself (for it is necessary that an assent be moved by impression); but Chrysippus falls back on his cylinder and cone, which cannot begin to move unless they are struck; but when this happens, he thinks that it is by its own nature, properly speaking, that the cylinder rolls and the cone turns. “Therefore,” he says, “just as the one who pushed the cylinder gave it the principal cause of motion, but did not give it ‘rollability’, so too impression which strikes us will ‘impress’ and, as it were, ‘stamp’ its image upon our mind, but assent will be in our power. And assent, just as was said about the cylinder, though pushed by something external, will thereafter be moved by its proper force and nature...⁸

⁷ καὶ μήν ἐν γε τοῖς πρὸς τοὺς Ἀκαδημαίων ἀγώνων ὁ πλείως λόγος αὐτῷ τε Χρυσίππῳ καὶ Ἀντιπάτρῳ περὶ τινὸς γέγονε; περὶ τὸν μήπε πράττειν μηθ ὀρμῶν ἀπαγκαταθέτως, ἀλλὰ πλάσματα λέγει καὶ κενὰς ὑποθέσεις τοὺς ἠξιωύσας οἰκείας φαντασίας γενομένης εὗρος ὀρμῶν μὴ εἰξαντα μὴδε συγκαταθέμενος.

⁸ itaque illi rationi quam paulo ante conclusi sic occurrit: si omnia fato fiant, sequi illud quidem, ut omnia causis fiant antepositis, verum non principalibus causis et perfectis, sed adiuvantibus et proximis. quae si ipsae non sunt in nostra potentate, non sequitur ut ne adpetitus quidem sit in nostra potentate. at hoc sequetur, si omnia perfectis et principalibus causis fieri diceremus, ut, cum eae causae non essent in nostra potentate, ne ille quidem esset in nostra potentate...quod enim dicantur adscriptiones fieri causis antepositis, id quale sit, facile a se explicari putat. nam quamquam adscription nullam possit fieri nisi commota viso, tamem, cum id visum proximam causam habeat, non principalem, hanc habet rationem, ut Chrysippus vult, quam durum diximus; non ut illa quidem fieri possit nulla vi extrinsecus excitata (necesse est enim adscriptionem viso commoveri) sed revertitur ad cylindrum et ad turbinem suum, quae moveri incipere nisi pulsa non possunt. id autem cum accidit, suapte natura, quod superest, et cylindrum volvi et versari turbinem putat. “ut igitur” inquit “qui protrusit cylindrum, dedit ei principium motionis, volubilitatem autem non dedit, sic visum obiectum imprimet illud quidem et quasi signabit in animo.
Now if Ioppolo’s evidence is rejected for coming from Academic and late sources, and if Cicero’s quotations are accepted on the assumption of Antiochus’ faithful preservation of Chrysippean doctrine, De fato 40 is still not explained since it too is presumably filtered through Antiochus. I do not think there is inconsistency in Antiochus’ reporting. Rather if one reads both Luc. 24-25 and De fato 41-42 more closely, it is possible to construct a theory of action that makes sense of all the testimonia.

II. A Reading of the Evidence

What is most striking is that no piece of evidence claims that the cause of impulse is assent to a hormetic impression. And that is what we would expect if Stobaeus’ report (supra n.1) were using some sort of short hand for, “a hormetic impression rouses impulse, after an hormetic impression receives assent” (or “hormetic proposition” as Inwood argues infra n.17).

Let us begin with the last passage, the most authoritatively Chrysippean. De fato 41-42 is remarkable for the way it treats impulse and assent separately. In the first response to ¶40, only impulse is treated and no mention is made of assent. The argument runs, “If all things happened by primary and complete causes and these were not in our power, impulse would not be in our power; but this is not the case; primary and complete causes are in our power and therefore so is impulse.” No role is provided for assent in this argument; and there is no suggestion that impulse is in our power only because assent (occurring before it) is in our power (as Inwood seems to interpret). One might just as well conclude that impulse can be a primary and complete cause (like assent) and that impulse also is capable of breaking the chain of necessity. The independence of impulse is not subordinated to the independence of assent. Rather the implication is that impulse might also be regarded as what makes man free.

The argument then shifts to a discussion of how assent can come about by antecedent causes yet be free of fate. And in the second argument there is no mention of impulse. He says only that the antecedent cause of assent is impression, in accordance with the common Stoic doctrine that persuasiveness of impressions is the antecedent cause of evil.9 Chrysippus’ examples of the cylinder and cone seem deliberately to set aside the issue of impulse. The problem is that unlike animals, objects do not have the power of impulse; they are not capable of self-motion. In his illustration there are two references that might allude to impulse: the first is the external push; the second is his reference to suapte vi et natura, the idea that the objects move “by their own force and nature”. He is attempting to isolate the one element which gives the cylinder and cone “rollability”, that is, the power to roll or not to roll, the object’s “proper force and nature”. This corresponds well to assent: the cylinder roles and the cone circles because the unique defining characteristic of each, their analogous equivalent of “moral personality”, should properly be compared to assent. There is one more candidate for impulse – the rolling itself; but

suam speciem, sed adsenso nostra erit in potestate, cæque, quem ad modum in cylindro dictum est, extrinsecus pulsa, quod reliquum est suapte vi et natura movebitur...”

9 D.L. 7.89 = SVF 3.228; Plut. De Stoic Rep. 1057B (= SVF 3.177); Galen PHP 5.320.18-19 De Lacy = EK 169.69-73; Epictetus Diss. 1.28, 2.18.24-26, Ench. 20.
this should properly correspond to action, not to impulse (though possessing “rollability” the
cylinder does nothing to “initiate a movement”). In fact the impulse to roll begins before the
analogue of assent (rollability) and continues after it, resulting in action. If one will see an illusion
to impulse in the simile, it must both precede and follow assent. In any event, one cannot argue
that this text definitively shows assent as the sole cause of impulse in man.

The question raised by the other two passages, Plut. De Stoic rep. 1057A-B and Luc. 24-
25 is why the Stoics believed that taking assent from man would lead to apraxia. It is important
to note that the point of attack of Arcesilaus was not assent to hormetic impression, but the non-
existence of “kataleptic impression,” φαντασία καταληπτική.10 The conclusion that all assent
would be impossible followed automatically. The Stoic apraxia argument was that removing
kataleptic assent would make purposeful action impossible. The question of assent to hormetic
impression was left by the wayside. One must approach Plutarch and Antiochus in this context.

Luc. 24-25 argues that impulse cannot occur unless an impression has been 1) presented;
2) believed, that is, distinguished from a false one; and 3) perceived whether it accords with
nature. The first poses no difficulty – impression precedes impulse. The second involves
assent, but clearly assent to a “kataleptic” impression, as the distinction discerni non poterit a
falso assures (cf. Luc. 2.77-78). Inwood, following Striker, argues that kataleptic impressions can
never be hormetic because kataleptic impressions “compel our assent” (and one can be
compelled, as it were, to recognize the veracity of sensation, but not to act).11 That is, one is not
assenting to the appropriateness of an action in the second case, but only to whether the
impression is a true of false representation of the object. The hostile report of Plutarch seems to
fall into this same category. It does not show decisively whether Chrysippus and Antipater were
arguing about the necessity of assent to kataleptic or hormetic impressions. Given the context of
“true” and “false” impressions (in the argument which follows Plutarch’s quotation above), it
seems likely to have been to the kataleptic.

The third instance from Luc. 24-25 may seem to imply assent to hormetic impression,
but does not as Seneca makes clear, “Natural impulses are toward what is useful, natural
aversions are from their opposites; without any thought to dictate it, without any deliberation,
whatever nature has prescribed is done.”12 Seneca is speaking in this letter about the force of
οἰκείωσις that orients all beings toward the constitution that accords with nature. This passage
captures, I think, the proper sense of “self-evidently”, αὐτοθέν, in the Stobaeus passage (supra
n.1) where τοῦ καθήκουτος corresponds to Seneca’s utilia. Perceiving whether something
accords with nature is still a process of identification, e.g., whether something is food or is not
food (which is “self-evidently” among the things appropriate to all animals). Luc. 24-25 is not
alluding to the kind of prudential consideration such as whether it is “appropriate” to take the

10 So Inwood supra n.1 86-88. The two attacks were (Sext. Ad Math 7.151-57): 1) cognition (κατάληψις) occurs
either in a wise man or a fool. In the wise man it is science (ἐπιστήμη); in the fool it is opinion (δόξα). Moreover
cognition is not made to impressions but to propositions (ἀλήθεια). 2) No impression exists of such a kind that it
could not be false. See also Long and Sedley (supra n.1) 1.455-60; G. Striker, “Skeptical Strategies,” in Schofield,
11 Inwood supra n.1 59 n.106 following Striker supra n.10 71-72. See also Inwood 76 and Cic. Luc. 2.38; Sext.
Emp. Ad Math. 7.253-60; Epictetus Diss. 1.28.1-4.
12 naturales ad utilia impetus, naturales a contrariis asperationes sunt; sine uilla cogitatione quae hoc dictet, sine
consilio fit, quidquid natura praeceptit. (Ep. 121.21)
last piece of food when others are hungry. One may conclude then that kataleptic assent necessarily precedes impulse (since we must recognize that a thing is what it appears to be, and is among the appropriate things), but not that assent to hermetic impression is necessary to stimulate impulse.

III. Impulses Are Assents

The one piece of evidence that most directly challenges the idea of impulse preceding assent is Stobaeus Ecl. 2.88.1-6 (SVF 3.171). He explains that impulse and assent should be considered in two senses in a sort of parallel process:

All impulses are assents, and the practical ones contain the power of movement. But assents are to one thing and impulses to another. That is, assents are made to certain propositions, but impulses are to the predicates contained somehow in the propositions to which we assent.13

Inwood and Ioppolo treat with skepticism the implication in the first line that there are “non-practical” impulses (impulses that lack the power of movement).14

In response to their concern, Luc. 30 shows a sequence of 1) impression; 2) impulse (when impelled by impressions); and 3) “We direct the senses to perceive objects.” It seems to imply an impulse not to action, but simply to perception, a good candidate for non-practical impulse. Seneca also speaks of this kind of impulse (Ep. 117.13): “I see Cato walking. Sensation has shown this; the mind has believed it. What I see is a body, to which I direct my eyes and my mind.”15 Seneca’s use of “direct,” intendit, echoes Luc. 30. But the remainder of Luc. 30 goes on to describe why some impulses lead to action and others do not:

For the mind itself which is the source of the senses and even is sensation itself has a natural force which it directs to the things by which it is moved. Thus it seizes on some impressions so as to use them immediately; it “stores away” others as it were, and from these memory arises; but the rest it arranges by similarities from which are produced notions of things, which the Greeks call ἐννοοῖαι and προλήψεις.16

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13 πάσας δὲ τὰς ὀρμὰς συγκαταθέσεις εἶναι, τὰς δὲ πρακτικὰς καὶ τὸ κυνηγικὸν περιέχειν. ἡδὲ ἄλλῳ [W.; ἄλλων von Arnim] μὲν εἶναι συγκαταθέσεις, ἕπὶ δὲ ἄλλῳ δὲ ὀρμάς. καὶ συγκαταθέσεις μὲν ἄξιωμα τῶν ὀρμῶν, ὀρμάς δὲ ἐπὶ κατηγορήματα τὰ περιεχόμενα πως εν τοῖς ἄξιωμασι, οἰς συγκαταθέσεως. Luc. 38 suggests a similar parallel: nam quo modo non potest animal ullum non adpetere it quod accommodatum ad naturam adpareat (Graeci id oikêion appellant), sic non potest objectum rem perspicicium non adprobare.
15 video Catonem ambulantem. Hoc sensus ostendit, animus creditit. Corpus est quod video, cui et oculos intendit et animum.
16 Mens enim ipsa quae sensum fons est atque etiam ipsa sensus est, naturalem vim habet quam intendit ad ea quibus movetur. Itaque alia visa sic arripit ut iis statim utatur, alia quasi recondit, e quibus memoria oritur, cetera
In §26 (SVF 2.103, cf. 102) we are told that the mind uses impulse to pursue cognition (κατάληψις), quae est adpetitio cognitionis. While it is possible to construe the “natural force” in §30 as assent (as Chrysippus seems to do in the cylinder simile) §26 suggests strongly that impulse is more probable. Thus one candidate for “non-practical” impulse is the impulse to perceive objects.

But I think there is a stronger reading of Stobaeus. To each impulse, there corresponds assent to a proposition.17 One might assume the impression that generates the impulse to perception is kataleptic, and that to action hormetic. But this is clearly wrong since only an hormetic impression can “move” an impulse (Stob. supra n.1); there are no impulses generated by kataleptic impression. Rather, as Inwood shows (supra n.1 86-87 and n.213), a single hormetic impression may also comprise a kataleptic impression to which kataleptic assent is given before impulse and hormetic assent come into play. But since all impulses are roused by hormetic impression, the evidence above from Luc. 26 and 30 must still apply to hormetic impression. I would argue that τὰς δὲ πρακτικὰς in the Stobaeus passage above should be interpreted to mean “those that are capable of causing action”.18 This would mean that some impulses are not the efficient cause of action and others are. These would correspond to impulses prior to hormetic assent (which lack the authority / ability to cause action itself) and impulses subsequent to hormetic assent (which are the efficient causes of action and “contain the power of movement).

But if one removes preliminary impulse from association with hormetic assent, one must ask in what way “all impulses are assents”, that is, to what assent preliminary impulse would correspond. There is an answer suggested by Luc. 2.38:

Just as when weights are placed on a scale the pan must fall, so the mind must yield to clear impressions: for in no way can any animal fail to have an impulse to what appears in accordance with nature (the Greeks call it οἰκεῖον); so also it cannot fail to give approval to a clear impression of an object.19

autem similitudinibus construit, ex quibus efficiuntur notitiae rerum, quas Graeci tum ἑννοιας tum προλήψις vocant.

17 Since Stobaeus tells us that assents are made to propositions, Inwood postulates the existence of an “hormetic” proposition to which assent to a hormetic presentation is properly made (supra n.1 59-66). Ioppolo objects 1) that there is no evidence for such a thing, and 2) that evidence from the apraxia debate shows Zeno held that assents are to impressions while Arcesilaus argued contra that they are to propositions; therefore Stobaeus is reporting a later position, adopted by Chrysippus (supra n.2 457-62). She makes much of the fact that Zeno regarded impression as a τύπωσις (D.L. 7.46 = SVF 2.53) that is, as an iconic process rather than a verbal one. But I see no evidence that the explanation in the last sentence of the Stobaeus passage would be impossible for Zeno to accept (so Inwood 275 n.95). Ioppolo argues that the Stobaeus passage abolishes temporal sequence, making impulse and assent identical or simultaneous (462). She takes Arcesilaus’ argument that assents are made to propositions (supra n.10) to imply that temporal sequence had held for Zeno, but that Chrysippus did away with it. But the only evidence for this conclusion is her reading of the Stobaeus passage.

18 Inwood suggests emendation to make the adjective refer to assents (supra n.1 288 n.271), thereby making hormetic assent the cause of impulse. But as I have said, there is no evidence that hormetic assent causes impulse.

19 ut enim necesse est lancem in libra ponderibus impositis deprimi, sic animum perspicuis cedere: nam quo modo non potest animal ullum non adpetere id quod accommodatum ad naturam adpareat (Graeci id oικεῖον appellant), sic
The passage is controversial because 1) it is late (Antiochus); 2) it uses dubious technical terms: *cedere, perspicua*; and 3) because it seems to assimilate human and animal action – a move made by Arcesilaus which the Stoics should be eager to counter. But despite all these objections, it suggests an interesting possibility. The assent associated with the impulse to what accords with nature (an hormetic impression of the appropriate, in Stobaeus’ phrase *supra* n.1) is not to an hormetic impression at all. Rather one has a preliminary impulse simultaneously with assent to a kataleptic impression. To recognize that some potential object of choice is among the appropriate things is to have an impulse to it. That is, kataleptic assent and preliminary impulse may be identified. This passage mirrors the evidence from ¶24-25 where the assent needed for impulse was kataleptic: assent (to a kataleptic impression) that something is “among the appropriate things” is not assent (to an hormetic impression) that “it is fitting for me to act.”

Cicero also implies the close relationship of impulse and kataleptic assent in the most reliable of passages, *De fin.* 3.16-18 (*SVF* 3.182, 189). When he describes human development, he assigns *katalêpseis* to children as among the objects of their first impulse, the *prôtê hormê*. One might conclude that *katalêpsis* is among the things that children must acquire to use impulse correctly.

Now I do not mean to imply that no further assent is necessary for action. One does not take a piece of food every time one has an impression of it. Nor do I wish to imply that one may choose what kind of preliminary impulse to have in a given situation, as though preliminary impulse were as clearly a matter of free-will as assent. Yet I do wish to reserve for it independence from hormetic assent. The assimilation of human action to animal action in *Luc.* 38 obscures a vital issue of moral responsibility that affects human action. Man possesses *logos* and every impression of rational being is rational (D.L. 7.51 = *SVF* 2.61). Human impression differs from animal impression by containing *lekta* (ibid., Sext. Emp. *Ad Math.* 8.70 = *SVF* 2.187). The state of man’s *logos* plays a decisive role in the type of impulse elicited. *Logos* is comprised of the “pre-conceptions” (*προληψεις*) and “conceptions” (*ἐννοιαί*) that make up experience (Aet. *Plac.* 4.11.1-4 = *SVF* 2.83). Epictetus argues that the cause of improper actions is rooted in conceptions of what is “appropriate” and in what is “in our power” and what is not. His advice that we scrutinize this content of *logos* (Diss. 1.22) is intended as a corrective to the tendency of the unwise to have improper impulses. Thus the independence of impulse is dependent upon the fact that *logos* is in our power. In the heat of action, however, there is no time for reflection and impulse will follow according to the *lekta* elicited from the current state of *logos*.

If one assents that something is what it appears to be and that it is appropriate, it remains to be clarified how the rest of the process works – the relationship between preliminary impulse and assent to final impulse. Seneca explains in *Ep.* 113.18 (*supra* n.4): “Every rational animal does nothing unless first it has been aroused by the impression of something, and then has had an

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non potest obiectam rem perspicuam non adprobare. Cf. the similarity of language to Plut. *Adv. Col.* 1122A-B (*supra* n.3) and *De Stoic. rep.* 1057A (*supra* n.7).


21 One need not read Sen. *Ep.* 121.21 to mean that impulse is not dependent upon any act of reason. One must be able to identify objects as being what they appear to be and as appropriate. This requires kataleptic assent, and as assent is to propositions, *lekta* will be required.
impulse, and then assent has confirmed this impulse. What this assent is, I shall explain. ‘It is appropriate that I walk’; then finally I walk, whenever I have said this to myself and approved this opinion of mine.” His verb for “it is appropriate”, oportet, is the usual Latin translation for καθήκον. This is the vital content of the hormetic impression that rouses impulse (Stob. supra n.1). This, Seneca argues, is also contained in the assent to the hormetic impression, which takes the form oportet me ambulare.22 One might conclude from his description that oportet me ambulare is a verbal representation associated with the impulse he already has and the katalectic assent he has already made. It cannot be a representation of them, because impulses are only to predicates, are not propositional, and lack the vital operator, me (D.L. 7.64). He calls the proposition, oportet me ambulare, an “opinion” or “weak assent,” doxa, which one would not attribute to the wise man. But it is natural to call it so if impulse coincides with mere identification of (that is, katalectic assent to) the object as “among the appropriate things.” To assent that “to walk is appropriate”, oportet ambulare, almost demands consideration by assent of the associated proposition oportet me ambulare. An agent must determine whether this appropriate thing is appropriate “for him” in light of prudential considerations.

IV. Impulse and the Role of Character in Action

To Seneca’s wording one might object “the wise man never opines” (D.L. 7.121 = SVF 3.549). One possible explanation for this might be that the wise man has completely harmonized his impulses to accord with reason and deliberation is unnecessary (Inwood 109; Epictetus Diss. 1.2.12-13). He alone is in a position to make assent and impulse to an hormetic impression coincide, because the state of his logos is so consistent that his preliminary impulse need never conflict with the demands of reason. The defining characteristic of the wise man is that all his kathêkonta are katorthômata. The rest of mankind lives with rational inconsistency and thus must deliberate upon the best course of action given conflicting lekta and impulses. The course of action we adopt will be determined by two factors: our character, that is, the tensional hexis of each of the powers of our soul, which represents the way we have been shaped by past actions; and by our capacity to improve or damage character by acting independently of it. Chrysippus’ explanation of the relation of fate to free-will in De fato 41-3 establishes the crucial capacity of assent to escape from the causal nexus that would exist if character alone determined each new action. For then each action would be determined by prior actions in endless succession.

Epictetus speaks about the effect of independent assent upon the hexis or state of our impulse (Diss. 2.18.6-9):

Whenever you have yielded to intercourse with someone, do not count this a single yielding, rather add that you have fed and increased your weak will. For it is inevitable that from corresponding actions, some dispositions (hexeis) and powers (dunameis) will come into existence that were not there before, and others will be intensified and strengthened. In this way, to be sure, the philosophers say

22 Inwood supra n.1 86-87; Cic. Tusc. Disp. 3.74; Long and Sedley supra n.1 1.421.
that infirmities arise. For as soon as you begin to desire money, if reason is
applied to the perception and judges it an evil, the desire is halted and our
hegemôn is restored to its original state. But if you apply no remedy, it no
longer goes back to the same state; rather the next time, roused by the
Corresponding impression, it is swept into desire more quickly than before.\textsuperscript{23}

The \textit{hexis} about which he is speaking is clearly that of impulse, because he speaks of a desire
(\textit{epithumia}) arising from an impression – before reason is applied – more quickly the second time
the impression is encountered. The implication is that assents have a material impact upon the
state of our impulses, upon their \textit{hexeis}. Origen makes the same point (from the standpoint of
moral progress rather than decay) using the same example:

But if someone should say that the external event is such that it is impossible for
him, being of such a character, to resist it, let him consider his own passions and
motions [sc. of the soul] to see if perhaps there is not an agreement and assent and
inclination of the mind to this act because of these particular persuasive factors
[sc. in the situation]. For, let us say, – a woman appears to a man who has
decided on sexual restraint and celibacy and summons him to do something against
his resolution – she is not the perfect cause of him putting aside his resolution.
For in each instance he consents to the titillation and smoothness of the pleasure
and, being unwilling to resist it or to stand by his decision, he does the
intemperate thing. Another fellow will behave in the opposite way, when the
same circumstances occur, if he has learned and practiced more lessons. For the
titillations and allures occur, but his reason, because it has been strengthened and
nourished by training and confirmed in its beliefs with respect to virtue (or close
to it), thrusts away the allures and dissolves the desire.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{23} οί ἄνευ τιμήθης τινος ἐν συνουσίᾳ, μη τὴν μίαν ἥτταν ταύτην λογίζου, ἀλλ’ ὅτι καὶ τὴν ἀκρασίαν σου
τέτροφάς, ἐπιτυχήσας. ἀδύνατον γὰρ ἀπὸ τῶν καταλλήλων ἔργων μη καὶ τὰς ἔξεις καὶ τὰς δυνάμεις τὰς μὲν
ἐμφύεσαι μὴ πρότερον οὕτως, τὰ δὲ ἐπιτείνεσθαι καὶ ἱσχυροποιεῖσθαι. οὕτως ἀμέλει καὶ τὰ ἀρρωστήματα
ὑποφύεσθαι λέγοντων οὶ φιλόσοφοι. ὅταν γὰρ ἁπαξ ἐπιθυμήσῃς ἀργυρίου, ἂν μὲν προσαχθῇ λόγος εἰς
αἰσθήσεων ἰδίων τοῦ κακοῦ, πέπαινε τῇ ἐπιθυμίᾳ καὶ τῷ ἡμεροποιοῦ ἡμῶν εἰς τὸ ἐξαρχής ἀποκατέστη ἐὰν δὲ
μὴν προσαγάγῃς εἰς θεραπείαν, οὐκέτι εἰς ταύτα ἐπάνεισιν, ἀλλὰ πάλιν ἐρεθισθεῖν ὑπὸ τῆς καταλλήλου
φαντασίας θάττον ἐρεθισθεῖν ὑπὸ τῆς καταλλήλου φαντασίας θάττον Ἐπάνεισιν προς τὴν
ἐπιθυμίαν.

\textsuperscript{24} ἐὰν δὲ τις αὐτὸ τὸ ἐξωθεῖν λέγει εἴναι τοιώνου, ὡστε ἀδυνάτος ἔχειν ἀντιβλέψαι αὐτῷ τοιώδε γενομένον,
οὕτως ἐπιστημεῖταί τοῖς ἱδίοις πάθεσι καὶ κινήσεσι, εἰ μὴ εὐδόκησας γίνεται καὶ συγκατάθεσις καὶ βοήθη τοῦ
ἡμεροποιοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ διὰ τάδε τὰς πιθανότητας. οὐ γὰρ, φερ’ ἐπειδή, ἡ γυνὴ τῷ κρίναι ἐγκράτεισθαι
καὶ ἀνέγεια ἐαυτῶν ἀπὸ μίσεων, ἐπιφανεία καὶ προκαλεσμένη ἐπὶ τὸ ποίησαι τὸ παρὰ πρόθεσιν, αὐτοτελῆς
αὐτίκα γίνεται τοῦ τὴν πρόθεσιν ἄδεικνυσθαι. πάντως τῷ εὐδόκησας τῷ γαργαλισμῷ τῷ λείῳ τῆς ἡδονῆς
ἀντιβλέψαι αὐτῶν μὴ βεβουλημένοι μὴδὲ τὸ κεκριμένον κυρώτατα, πράττει τὸ ἀκόλουθον. οὐ δὲ τὰς ἐμπαλιὰς,
tῶν αὐτῶν σύμβεβηκότων αὐτόν πλεῖστα μαθήματα ἀνείλθωται καὶ ἵστοράτοι οἱ μὲν γαργαλισμοὶ καὶ οἱ
ἐρεθισμοὶ συμβαίνουσι, δὲ τὸ λόγος δὲ, ἀτε ἐπὶ πλεῖον ἐγκρατείσης καὶ τραφεῖς τῇ μελέτῃ καὶ βεβαιωθεῖσι
τοῖς διόγμασι πρὸς τὸ καλὸν ἡ ἐγγύς γε τοῦ βεβαιωθῆναι γεγονόμενος, ἀνακρύσει τοὺς ἐρεθισμοὺς καὶ
ὑπεκλύει τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν.
The choice of sexual attraction as *exemplum* is particularly interesting, because it is one of the more automatic of human responses. Even in the case of Origen’s moral progressor, before reason can be applied, desire (*epithumia*) already exists. That is to say, an impulse clearly precedes assent. That is not to say that it determines assent; on the contrary the reactions of the *phaulos* and the *prokopôn* are markedly different. The inferior man goes forward with the desire and assents to it, but the moral progressor withholds assent. Origen brings up the argument to prove that we do assent whether we realize it or not, when we allow the desire to go forward, and Epictetus shows that this assent has further implications for our character. The moral progressor is someone who has two weapons: sound opinions that aid his current choice; but also training, that is, past rejections of similar impressions that have shaped his character. In Epictetus’ example we see the *hexis* of impulse described as an important component of character. It is in this context that we should interpret the words of Stobaeus, as he defines the last of five species of impulse (*Ecl. 2.87.11-12*), “when the *hexis hormêtikê* is added, which indeed the Stoics call impulse in its own sense, as the origin from which impulse occurs; impulse is used in five senses.”25 Impulsive *hexis* can be called an impulse because is “the cause” of impulse in a certain sense. What “moves” an impulse, Stobaeus tells us, is the impression. But the psychic disposition that determines the nature of the impulse is the *hexis*. If one thinks of this *hexis* as a part of character, Stobaeus is asserting that character “acts”; and when it acts, it produces another impulse in accordance with which we may be said to “act” in the manner of the second impulse.

The interesting question is not why the *phaulos* and the *prokopôn* assent differently, but why they have the same *epithumia*. Seneca says that nature gives man “natural impulses to what is useful and natural aversions to the opposite” and “whatever nature prescribes is done without deliberation” (*Ep. 121.21*). The *phaulos* and the *prokopôn* were each presented with something natural, intercourse. Even the wise man will procreate (*D.L. 7.121 = SVF 1.270*). But intercourse is among the indifferent things, neither good nor evil, and as such may be used well or badly (*D.L. 7.102 = SVF 3.117*). The indifferents that are in accordance with nature (*τὰ κατὰ φύσιν*) and contribute to a harmonious life have value (*αξία*) and are preferred (*προηγμένα*); those that do not accord with nature and detract from this life have disvalue (*απαξία*) and are dispreferred (*αποπροηγμένα*); and those that have neither value nor disvalue are indifferent in an absolute sense (Stob. *Ecl. 2.83.10-11*, *D.L. 7.105 = SVF 3.124, 126*). The preferred indifferents by virtue of being “in accordance with nature” meet the definition of *τὸ καθήκον*, and are “the material and origin”, the *υλή* and *αρχή*, of “appropriate acts” *καθήκοντα* (*Plut. De com. not. 1069E = SVF 3.491*). But there is an important distinction to be made: impulses to appropriate things do not always result in appropriate acts, as for instance in the case of the *phaulos* and the *prokopôn* above whose impulses to something appropriate, intercourse, were inappropriate (outside the context of marriage and procreation). Like Seneca, Zeno linked *kathêkon* to *oikeiôsis*, defining the appropriate as *τὰ ἑαυτὸν ἀσακεναίς οἰκεῖον*, “what is oriented to nature’s arrangements”; but he distinguished acts according to impulse as appropriate, the opposite, and neither (*D.L. 108 = SVF 3.493, 495*). The determining criterion among the three is what is dictated by reason in its normative sense (*ibid.*).

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25 προστεθείσης δὲ καὶ τῆς ξέως τῆς ὀρμητικῆς, ἦν δὴ καὶ ἰδίως ὀρμητίων λέγουσιν, ἀφ’ οὗ συμβαίνει ὀρμήν, πενταχώς.
Now the examples from Epictetus and Origen above have both the phaulos and the prokoptôn conceive an epithumia, one of the four cardinal passions. The moral progressor withholds assent to his impulse and cannot be said really to have suffered a passion. The Zenonian definition of passion includes the element of wrong assent (doxa) to an hormetic impression (Cic. Tusc. Disp. 3.74, Galen PHP 4 p.281.24 De Lacy = SVF 1.212). The status of such an impulse is then called into question; for lacking assent, it cannot be called epithumia in the same sense as the phaulos' subsequent passion. Zeno acknowledged that there must be something preliminary to passion, that resembles it. Seneca attributes to him the phrase “shadows of passions”, umbras affectuum (De ira 1.16.7 = SVF 1.215); the usual term is προπάθεια or “preliminary passions”.26 Seneca addresses himself to the problem, using a wide array of examples: shivering; sudden recoil on touching something; the hair standing on end at bad news; blushing; dizziness; the kind of anger an audience may feel at a play; our reactions to music or war-trumpets; the mental shock caused by gruesome pictures or an execution; smiling or crying when others do (De ira 2.2). He calls them proludentia affectibus, the “preludes” or “warm-ups” to the passions. Most of the examples Seneca chooses are bodily reactions, but the mention of an audience’s anger at something shown at a theatre, suggests a psychic dimension to all of them (cf. his comparison of bodily and psychic aspects in 2.4.). I think one might reasonably add Origen’s exemplum to his list “the sexual attraction one feels in the face of a seduction”. Seneca distinguishes these reactions from the passions by insisting they are involuntary and unavoidable. Even the sage retains a psychic scar, leaving him liable to some of them (De ira 1.16.7 supra). Seneca explicitly withholds the label impetus, “impulse”, from the preliminary passions, but he does incorporate them into his theory of action. He says “the first motion is involuntary, a preparation for passion, as it were, and a threatening of some kind” est primus motus non voluntarius, quasi praeparatio affectus et quaedam comminatio (2.4.1). The term primus motus is later called primum ictum (2.4.2) “the first blow” to the mind, which he explicitly places in the same category as the other preliminary passions (2.2.2). Thus in Seneca’s eyes the important aspect of this problem is not how to account for dizziness vel sim. in the theory of action, but that such events lead to real passions in inferior men. Since these reactions are unavoidable, Seneca is compelled, I think, to say they are in accordance with nature, which brings us back to the problem of to kathēkon and his assertion that our impulse to utilia and our aversion to the opposite is done without deliberation, and thus, Epictetus claims, involuntarily (Diss. 1.28.5-6). Seneca clarifies that while some reaction to such stimuli is inevitable, the kind of reaction one has is not, “Reason cannot overcome these things, but perhaps habit and constant observation may attenuate them”, ista non potest ratio vincere, consuetudo fortasse et adsidua observatio extenuat (2.4.2). Thus to some extent the nature of our preliminary passions is “in our power” ἐπὶ ἡμᾶς. Epictetus’ description above explains that we have control over the hēxis of our impulse in the sense that we can improve it or damage it by our assents. In both his example and that of Origen, the phaulos and the prokoptôn suffer a preliminary epithumia. As Seneca says, if unchecked, this impulse may lead to passion; it is the job of assent to halt the impulse, just as

26 On the preliminary passions, see Inwood (supra n.1) 175-81 and “Seneca and Psychological Dualism” in Brunschwig and Nussbaum, Passions and Perceptions (Cambridge 1993) 150-83.
Origen's prokoptón does. Zeno is credited with defining passion as “a motion of the soul that is irrational and contrary to nature, or an excessive impulse” ἡ ἀλογὸς καὶ παρὰ φύσιν ψυχής κίνησις. ἦ ὁρμὴ πλεονάζουσα; by “excessive” he means “disobedient to reason” ἀπειθὴ τῷ αἴροντι λόγῳ (D.L. 7.110; Stob. Ecl. 2.88.9 = SVF 1.205). It was very difficult for the Stoics to explain how this could occur in a monistic model of the soul. Posidonius exploits Chrysippus’ attempts to explain the origin of excess, that is, how impulse could seem to disobey reason (Galen PHP 4 p.242.2-8 De Lacy = SVF 3.462). The Stoics had, however, a sound explanation for why impulse might cease to obey reason. There are different kinds of impulses: one’s impulse to the good (ἔρεξις) is unrestrained, αὐτοτελής (Stob. Ecl. 2.75.1-3 = SVF 3.131); the good is “what to be chosen” (2.97.15-21 = SVF 3.91). The Stoics define epithumia as “an irrational orexis or a pursuit of something falsely supposed to be good” (SVF 3.391). Since both the good and the preferred indifferents are among the things in accordance with nature, and thus appropriate, there is the possibility of confusion when an agent is presented with to kathēkon. What distinguishes “rational” from “irrational” orexis is whether one’s identification of the object is true or false. Thus katalectic assent and the state of logos that generates its lekta (by which we identify things as true or false representations of what they appear to be) plays an important role in the Stoic theory of passion.

But the texts from Epictetus and Seneca above suggest that one has some control over the type of impulse used as well, a control that appears to be independent of the katalectic assent of the moment. The nature of preliminary impulse differs from wise man to fool. Seneca had suggested that training may be beneficial. Epictetus advises the prokoptón to avoid the use of orexis altogether and to use impulse “lightly”; the true progressor, he says, “stands watch as if he were his own enemy scheming against himself” (fr. 27, Ench. 49). He so strongly believes that using the wrong kind of impulse is a significant cause of passion that he seems to remove the impulse to the good (orexis) and from the evil (ekklisis) from impulse, making it a coordinate genus: we must use impulse for the things outside our control and reserve orexis for the things under our control (action in accordance with virtue). His claim that one can choose to use one kind of impulse over another implies that impulse is under our control in some meaningful way apart from katalectic assent. For in his example of intercourse (supra Diss. 2.18.6-9) Epictetus warns that a single assent to intercourse materially alters the hexis hormētikē, assuring that the impulse to epithumia will arise more quickly the next time.

Stobaeus says that the cause of passion, the excessive impulse, is “the false supposition” (Ecl. 90.7-18 = SVF 3.394), by which he implies that when one assents to the object as being good or not, the kind of impulse is determined automatically. But he also says of the hardened state of the soul corrupted by passion, sickness (νόσημα), that it is “a judgment of epithumia that has degenerated and hardened into a hexis, according to which what is not to be chosen is to be chosen strongly” νόσημα δ' εἶναι δόξαν ἐπιθυμίας ἑρωτηματαῖον εἰς ἔξω καὶ ἐνεκκρομένην, καθ' ἤ τον ὑπολαμβάνοντι τά μῆ αἱρέτα σφόδρα αἱρέτα εἶναι (Ecl. 2.93.6-8 = SVF 3 421, Inwood supra n.1 163). This remark helps to explain why he calls impulse rational, λογική (Ecl. 2.87.1-13 = SVF 3.169). The character of our impulse can be described by an opinion, doxa, which is

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27 Inwood (supra n.1) 114-126; Epictetus Diss. 2.17. Epictetus does appear to reunite them when he discusses kathēkonta 3.7.25-26.
subject to our control. When the phaulos assents to intercourse, he also changes the disposition of his impulse, giving it the new doxa that “what is not to be chosen is to be chosen”. As his hexis degenerates he will be inclined to choose this thing more and more strongly. To reverse these effects, he must at some point withhold assent to the ever increasing demands of his impulsive character. For this reason bad character strains against moral improvement just as good character builds on its own momentum. When Epictetus advises the moral progressor not to use orexis at all, that is, not to have any unrestrained impulses to the good (because he lacks wisdom, the ability to judge what is good, D.L. 7.92 = SVF 3.265), he means for him to form an assent that will alter the character of his impulse of the sort “nothing is to be chosen (αἰρετόν) unreservedly (αὐτοτελεῖ)”. One finds frequent mention of the concept of “reservation” (ὑπεξαίρεσις) in the sources, “a holding back from the use of haeresis” in one’s dealings with things that do not pertain to virtue. When Stobaeus says that false supposition is the cause of passion, one must add that there are two antecedent causes of it: the impression and the state of one’s impulsive character. Of these, the latter, is in the control of the agent in the special sense that he may alter it by his assent. The important conclusion to be drawn from this evidence is that the hexis or character of reason, logos, may include more than mere experiences of what is good, evil and neither. It may include assents that determine impulsive hexis as well. We have the ability to pursue things with impulse lightly or strongly, and in this sense also character is within our power and cannot be attributed to necessity.

IV. Reason as “Craftsman” of Impulse

Inwood’s construction of impulse as “a command to oneself which one obeys” (supra n.1 62) leaves little room for the role of impulse in action that I have suggested above. If impulse merely obeys reason, it cannot properly be said to be a locus of human freedom. The proper locus would have to be assent. But the evidence from Chrysippus in De fato 41-43 suggests that there are two poles, impulse and assent. I associated impulse with character (there are other aspects of character; this is only one) in an effort to show consistency among earlier and later Stoic texts on the subject of impulse. The main thrust of this argument is that kataleptic assent precedes impulse, but hormetic assent follows it. As such, preliminary impulse is in a position to influence action independently of hormetic assent. I have yet to explain, however, what happens to impulse after final assent.

In texts on the scala naturae there is general consistency in the claim that: 1) stones have hexis (they have states, but movement is external to them); plants have phusis (the ability to grow, an internal movement); animals have impression and impulse (the power of movement “from themselves” when stimulated by impression), but man possesses also the power of reason (which makes possible movement “through his own agency”, a perfect cause of action as distinct from the antecedent cause of impression). Each level of being possesses the characteristics of

28 Inwood (supra n.1) 165-73; Stob. Ecl. 115.5-9 (= SVF 3.564); Seneca De ben. 4.34 (= SVF 3.565); Epictetus fr. 27, Ench. 49.
29 Inwood (supra n.1) 21-27; Origen In Princ. 3.1.2-3 (= SVF 2.988), De orat. 6.1 (= SVF 2.989); Simplicius In Arisott. Cat.p.306 (= SVF 2.499).
the previous level, which change in form at the higher level of being. So for instance plants grow, but animals grow in a radically different manner than plants. Plants have *hexis* but their states are of a higher sophistication than those of rocks. With man, then, impulse cannot properly be considered the same as that of animals. Man possesses rational impulse, an impulse in accordance with which he may “act” in the true sense of the word.

Stoic texts on human development, however, emphasize that man is born with only impression and impulse actualized; reason is latent (Hierocles 1.5-33, 4.38-53). Thus children are pre-rational and their moral status is that of animals, though they exhibit outward signs of progress toward the acquisition of reason at age seven, a development completed only at age fourteen when one becomes a fully responsible moral being (Aet. *Plac.* 4.11.1-4 = *SVF* 2.83). Each of the orders of beings is “oriented” or “appropriated” by nature to nature. Thus *kathêkon* is shared by all orders of beings, though it differs for each: for plants it is natural to grow, for animals it is to move in accordance with impulse, for man it is to act in accordance with reason (D.L. 7.86 = *SVF* 3.178). Diogenes concludes this discussion of the *scala* by explaining that after reason is given to rational beings, their life according to nature becomes a life according to reason, “for this (sc. reason) comes after as a craftsman over impulse” τέχνην γὰρ οὕτως ἐπιγίνεται τῆς ὀρμῆς. The impulse of one who follows reason will be “craftsmanlike”; thus an impulse in accordance with reason will be, like the product of any craftsman, a reflection of its maker. But this explanation is offered in the context of the *scala*. Impulse exists in animals and in children. Reason supervenes upon it at the age of seven and transforms it, but the impulse existed prior to the actualization of reason. Moreover, the use of “craft” as an image suggests that impulse is the craft that reason practices: just as shoemakers shape shoes with skill, reason shapes impulse. One need not take this to mean that impulse is merely the product of reason, as though impulse were brought into existence by reason. One may just as easily argue, taking the image of a craft rather literally, that assent leaves its mark upon impulse, turning raw material into finished product.

If one accepts that impulse precedes hormetic assent, then is shaped and transformed by it into a fully rational product, some fundamental Stoic problems are solved more easily. The Stoics will have an explanation for the feeling of attraction to something prior to decision. They will have a more probable explanation for the origin of the passions: nature makes “the things in accordance with nature” attractive by providing an impulse to them. But this impulse need not carry with it the central weakness of dualism—the doctrine that man has something irrational in his very make-up. Rather it would say simply that there is a force that may pull against reason, but this force was designed by nature to be amenable to reason. There is a grave difference between the recognition that intercourse is among the appropriate things, toward which impulse impels us *qua* natural thing, and the assent that it is right for *me* in my circumstances to have intercourse with this specific person. The former process helps to explain human behavior in natural terms; the latter retains the doctrine that man is responsible for living according to reason. Perhaps most importantly, however, this reading of the evidence allows meaningful and substantial agreement on the role of impulse in action from Zeno to Epictetus. If preliminary impulse had always been a part of doctrine, Zeno and Seneca could be in substantial agreement on the cause of the passions. Lastly such a portrait helps to explain the motivations of Posidonius and perhaps Panaetius and others to make a move toward dualism. Posidonius will have been
motivated not so much by the desire to bring the Stoa over to dualism, as by the need to explain just what it is to which our impulse is drawn. His claim that the cause of passion sometimes arises in the “passionate” faculty and sometimes in the “theoretical” will have resonance with the monistic model in which not only false suppositions (weak assents) but also character (the nature of the impulse stimulated) can contribute to passion (Galen *PHP* 5 p.320.23-28 De Lacy = *EK* 169.77-84). Further, it makes late Stoic emphasis upon training and restraint in our impulses consistent with doctrines of the old Stoa.

Lastly it joins the Stoa more closely to the model of automatic action we see in Aristotle *De motu animalium* 7 701A. We have a disposition that says “I must drink” and upon the impression of something drinkable, we take it automatically. One finds frequent reference to yielding in sources purporting to represent the old Stoa (Plutarch, Antiochus). Without a doctrine of preliminary impulse, yielding is impossible, since assent must actively generate an impulse. But within a model of action in which assent to the proposition “walking is appropriate” is accompanied by an impulse to walk, further assent to the hormetic proposition “it is appropriate for me to walk” is not strictly necessary. Assent could abdicate its duty and allow impulse to result in action. In this way, the origin of passion is more easily explained.

This is without doubt a controversial re-reading of many Stoic texts but, I hope, a persuasive account that will lead to further discussion on the Stoic doctrine of impulse.